

## The Oath of Hippocrates

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# The Oath of Hippocrates

by [Melatonin\\_High](#)

## Summary

Tommy was forced into being a doctor at a young age because of his healing powers. He works nights at the hospital and finds the days blurring together. Feeling lost, he wanders into a bakery and meets someone who helps him stay grounded. Little does he know, his new friend is one of the villains that make his job harder.

Or:

Superhero AU where Tommy is a doctor and Wilbur is the villain, Tragedy, who also happens to work at a bakery. Crimeboys (+SBI) found family.

## Notes

hello! this is a new au i'm gonna start updating for along with my other ones. i really liked tommyinnit's clinic and got this idea so uhhh yeahhhh here we are

the name of the fic is a reference to the hippocratic oath that most medical doctors have to pledge before they graduate and i thought it'd be a cool and clever reference >:)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [tommyinnit's clinic for supervillains](#) by [bonesandthebees \(bonesandcacti\)](#).

# seems like i care too much

## Chapter Summary

“Is there a doctor?” The mother asked again desperately, setting her toddler on the floor and looking for a sign of him breathing.

“I’m a doctor,” Tommy announced firmly, pushing through the crowd of people to kneel beside the child. The mother looked up at him with a confused glare.

“You’re a kid! This isn’t- this isn’t a joke!” She shouted, bringing her toddler closer to her and keeping Tommy away from him.

Tommy rolled his eyes and grabbed his ID to his hospital out from where it hung under his shirt, and shoved it in her face for her to see. She hesitated for a moment before nodding sheepishly, putting her child back flat on the floor in front of them. Gasps and whispers filled the room at the sight of the child doctor, Tommy knew it well. Even his own patients asked him to see his ID, even when clad in his full lab coat and scrubs.

## Chapter Notes

// mention of blood, dissociation, dying child, panic

speaking of which this is going to be one of my darker fics and theres gonna be a lot of injuries and gore (seeing as it is a doctor/healer fic LOL) so if that makes you uncomfortable, beware!!

always lmk if i forget to warn abt something triggering in the cws which will be in the notes in the beginning of each chapter!

chapter title is a lyric from the song [YKWIM? by Yot Club](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy knew his job was important. He was told just how important it was every day. By his boss, his coworkers, his patients. It was probably because they could tell he hated it.

Tommy hated coming in to work for his night shift as the sun set and screams and sirens sounded in the distance, foreboding. He hated the feeling of helplessness he got when another patient died on the hospital bed, too far gone. He hated how he would go months without seeing the sun, while crimson red frequented his vision.

Tommy's days blurred into weeks that blurred into months. He pushed out the memories of healing another victim of an attack- or simply someone who got in the middle of a villain fight. He shoved down the anger that rose in his throat at the sight of a regular smirking at him, addicted to the feeling of being healed. Like a *drug*. He forced away the sourness he felt for the government- the *heroes* over forcing him to work before he was even old enough to drive.

Something like dread filled his gut as he saw another one of his fellow 'doctors' be dragged back into the hospital, kicking and screaming to be freed. People like him who tried to get out, but couldn't.

Some people would die for the power he has, the health industry is competitive, especially for those without healing powers. If he could, he would give his power away so he could pick his occupation. He could *choose* the life he wanted to live. But, instead, he was stuck with his curse.

Now, Tommy would be lying if he said his job wasn't rewarding, not only in pay but with his patients as well. Seeing another person go home to their families as good as new and happy was enough to keep him from running away. Prisoner to the system.

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Time seemed to blur together more and more every day. He would lose track of time and wake up in a haze, getting ready to work like second nature. Only for his roommate, Tubbo, to lead him back to bed with soft whispers of the weekend and taking breaks.

He didn't know how long it had been, but he found himself wandering through the city. It was a weekend and with his sheltered life, he didn't know how to spend it.

He almost thought about turning around and going back home. Then, he caught a whiff of the most wonderful smell, the aroma almost intoxicatingly sweet. He followed his nose to a bakery and smiled. One of his coworkers, Niki, had told him once about her love for baking. She had talked about her dream of owning a quaint little bakery. But her dreams were overtaken by the nature of her power. Her time to spend baking was taken over by medical training.

Tommy's smile fell a little at the memory but he still found himself wandering inside. In the building, the smell was even stronger and there were an array of different pastries and sweets lined up behind a glass casing of the countertop.

He noticed he was standing in a line for the counter as he looked at the menu.

Before he knew it he was at the front of the line and the man behind the counter smiled kindly at him, tilting his head his curly brown hair fell over his eyes a little more. "Hello, what would you like?"

The pinked haired man standing behind him, making an elaborate coffee with the machine elbowed the brunette and huffed. "You're supposed to say--"

“I know, shut up,” the brunette hissed lightheartedly, grinning smugly as the pink-haired man rolled his eyes and continued to his own work. “Sorry,” he said, looking a little embarrassed.

“It’s quite alright,” Tommy smiled, shaking his head. He looked up at the menu and the man just awkwardly stared at the screen in front of him, ready to type in his order. Tommy felt nervous as he saw many things he didn’t recognize or understand and eventually just turned to the brunette with a hesitant look. “What do you recommend?”

The man looked confused, like he was a robot and that wasn’t in his programming. He then shook his head, getting out of his stupor. “Uh, the chocolate eclairs are my personal favorite,” he said after looking at the counter thoughtfully, tapping his chin.

Tommy nodded even though the only thing he recognized in that name was ‘chocolate’. “What’s that?” He asked sheepishly, his hands in his pockets.

The brunette looked at him like he was crazy. “It’s a doughnut,” he said, bewildered.

“Right, right,” Tommy muttered, his cheeks flushing with embarrassment. “I’ll get one of those then.”

The brunette nodded and after Tommy told him that was all he was getting he paid. The man seemed surprised that Tommy had a debit card and knew how to use it. Though, he didn’t comment on it.

After that, the brown-haired man turned around and grabbed a long doughnut that had chocolate icing on it.

He noticed the bakery was laid out more like a cafe, with people on their laptops working or reading. Tommy sat down at a table and fidgeted with his hands, looking up at the TV displaying the news quietly. There was a reporter on screen, her hair flying around in the wind as she relayed the events of a building burning down in a villain fight the previous night. Tommy winced at the death count, but the number of survivors ultimately outnumbered the deaths. He still felt the drag of exhaustion from using his powers so much in such a small time frame.

The eclair on the small napkin in front of him smelt amazing, but Tommy found it hard to keep his appetite after the reminder of the people he failed.

He turned his attention out the window and decided he needed to eat it anyway, or he would’ve wasted five bucks for nothing.

When Tommy eventually mustered up the courage to take a bite he was delighted to find he liked it. He basically inhaled the rest of the doughnut and stood up, throwing away his trash.

He found himself sitting back down as the news continued playing, he didn’t really have much to do other than go home. But, he also didn’t want to face his roommate who would ask him what was wrong and Tommy didn’t want to talk about the death he had seen only the night before.

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He doesn't know how long he was sitting there, only that time had passed because the sun was lower in the sky. Tommy looked around and realized there were significantly fewer people in the bakery.

"Closing up soon, guys!" The brown-haired man from before announced, wiping a table down already.

It was probably around 7:00 in the afternoon, Tommy noted with a grimace. He walked out the door with his head down, getting a polite nod from the man as he passed him.

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When Tommy opened the door he knew he was in trouble. Tubbo was pacing the hallway furiously typing away at his phone. When Tubbo heard him his head snapped up to glare at him. "Where have you been all day?! You scared the shit out of me! Not answering my texts or calls, I thought you had died! Or worse!"

"Sorry, Tubbo," he sighed, walking in and taking his shoes off. The house they lived in was fairly nice, courtesy of Tommy's salary. They were well off on money but Tubbo still had a part-time job along with going to school. Even after all that, Tubbo still insisted he did the chores and make dinners because he felt Tommy did most of the heavy lifting. "Just forgot my phone when I went on a walk around town."

Tubbo's demeanor softened and his shoulders slumped. "It's okay, I was just worried," he relented, his voice much quieter. "Went on a walk, huh?" He prompted, both of them making their way to the living room.

"Yeah, I did," Tommy said lamely, shoving his hands in his pockets so Tubbo couldn't see his fidgeting.

"Glad you're getting outside more, it's good for you," he commented, sitting down at the table where he had obviously stress-cooked an entire meal for the both of them. "Any particular reason?"

"Hm?" Tommy looked up, nervously avoiding eye contact.

Tubbo stared at him for another moment before he sighed, shaking his head. "I saw the news you know," he started carefully. Tommy glanced up at him again, trying to determine where the conversation was going. "You have a big heart, Tommy. I know it's affecting you," he paused, pursing his lips as Tommy's expression dimmed. What 'it' was exactly, went unsaid. "You don't have to act like everything's fine around me, you know?"

Tommy nodded slowly and sat down at the table where a plate was already prepared with some dish Tubbo had found in one of the recipe books he had started collecting. "I know," he

murmured after a long, tense moment.

Nothing else was said as they both ate, occasionally looking up at each other like they wanted to say something. They never did.

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The weekend was over before it even began and Tommy was back at work again. He found himself dragging his feet and bought an energy drink. It kickstarted him again for another few hours, making his heart race unhealthily. He was a doctor, he should know better.

But, he still found himself in front of the vending machine again after it wore off. He had to be at peak performance in case of an emergency. And here he was, dragging ass.

A hand landed on his shoulder and he flinched violently, jumping up a little as he spun around to face his attacker. Niki stared back at him with a guilty frown, retracting her hand. “Tommy, you’ve been standing in front of the vending machine for the past ten minutes,” she said, studying his face.

Tommy shook his head, plastering a smile on his face. “Just trying to make a decision,” he excused, turning back to look at the vending machine.

Niki pursed her lips and sighed. “Take a break, Tommy. You look exhausted.”

Tommy shook his head. “Can’t,” he stated plainly with a shrug.

Niki looked like she wanted to protest but closed her mouth and walked away instead, relenting. It wasn’t the first time that she had tried to convince him to take a break. It wouldn’t be the last but he was far too stubborn to listen to her.

Tommy only felt slightly guilty at the look of defeat on Niki’s face when he passed her to meet another patient.

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The rest of the day dragged on like usual, nothing too memorable happened. When the weekdays went by he hadn’t even noticed.

He woke up on Saturday late in the afternoon to an empty house. He walked down the stairs and into the kitchen to find a note taped to the coffee machine, not the fridge. Tubbo knew him too well.

*I’m gonna be out today, meeting Ranboo to work on a school project. There’s food in the fridge. - Tubbo*



Tommy looked in the cabinet and found he had run out of coffee pods...

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Tommy wandered into the bakery with a little more confidence in his stride than before, hands in his pockets. It was early autumn and his jacket was mostly unnecessary, but Tommy always tended to feel colder than other people.

He wore a brown jacket that Tubbo had gotten him the previous winter, saying the color looked good on him. His bottoms were baggy, tan pants that are so old he can't exactly recall where he got them. The blue sweater he wears under his jacket is newer, something Tubbo knitted in his free time. Tommy doesn't know how he has so much of it.

"Hi, what would you like to order?" The same brown-haired man from the weekend before greeted automatically, turning to look up at him from the counter. "Oh hey, it's you again."

"Yeah, hi," Tommy said awkwardly, not expecting him to remember him. "I'll just have a uh... coffee..." he settled on, trying to read the menu above the brunette's head.

"Sugar? Cream? Anything? Help me out here man," the man grinned, something like teasing in his tone. "Ice, even?"

Tommy felt a smile creep upon his face, with a smirk he replied confidently. "Nah, I'll take it black."

He knew exactly what he was doing as the man's jaw dropped, in disgust or awe, Tommy didn't know. "That's absolutely vile."

Tommy rolled his eyes, his first guess seemed to be right. "Whatever, bakery boy. Big men don't need sweet shit to dilute their caffeine."

The brunette gasped in mock offense, holding his hand to his heart. "Are you saying I'm not a big man?"

With a smug lift of his expression, Tommy nodded.

"Wow, I can't believe you," the man said, shaking his head while trying to hide his smile. The banter between them came easily, like they had known each other for years. "And 'bakery boy'? Really?" The brunette leveled him an amused look when Tommy just gave him a toothless grin.

"Well, it fits, bakery boy," Tommy shrugged, watching as 'Bakery Boy' grabbed a coffee cup and got his order together.

"It doesn't really," Bakery Boy protested, pouring some coffee out of the recently made batch into the cup, still steaming.

"Why not?" He questioned as the brunette expertly popped the lid on in one smooth motion.

“Because it’s not my name,” he snarked, placing the coffee in front of him. “And working at this bakery isn’t my entire personality.”

“Then, what’s your name?” Tommy asked, cupping his hand around the warm coffee cup and taking his wallet out with the other hand.

“Wilbur,” the man replied with a kind smile, his circular-framed glasses reflecting the light coming in from the window.

“I’m Tommy.”

“Well, hello Tommy,” Wilbur chuckled lightly, the sound putting him at ease with a carefree feeling.

“What’s so funny?” He forced a skeptical frown as Wilbur rang his order up after confirming it was all he wanted to get.

Wilbur shook his head. “Oh nothing, just... it suits you,” he said. “Your name.”

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him for a moment before nodding slowly. “I’m going to take that as a compliment,” he declared, puffing his chest up slightly.

Wilbur laughed again and Tommy couldn’t describe the prideful feeling that festered in his chest. Something he barely recognized. “You do that.”

Tommy retreated back to the table he had sat at the weekend before, taking a sip of his coffee. His head turned to look up at the TV again, even though he really didn’t want to know what the news was focused on this time.

But, still, he stared as the news reporter calmly addressed the camera, his hands clasped in front of her. She then proceeded to recount the events of another villain attack by one of the most infamous groups of villains; The Syndicate.

Tommy found he couldn’t look away as they described what had happened recently. Apparently, two of the leaders and also the most recognized villains, Tragedy and Comedy, had been in a chase with Mirage and Melatonin. There were thankfully no civilians that got hurt or anything in the way, which is probably why Tommy didn’t know about it.

The news started to play a clip of Tragedy, the audio muted, as the man in the dark brown, beaten trench coat stood on a rooftop with his hands in his pockets casually. The opera mask that had dubbed him his name sat eerily motionless on his face in an exaggerated frown.

The news reporter was saying something over the video but Tommy didn’t understand a word of it as he stared at the screen. Almost knowingly, but it was clearly a coincidence, Tragedy turned to face the camera, tilting his head slowly. He didn’t even spare a glance behind him as Mirage rose to his feet shakily, fighting the effects of Tragedy’s powers.

There was almost a ringing sound in the back of his head as he focused on the screen. Suddenly he was snapped out of his thoughts by a cup landing on the table in front of him.

Tommy looked up to see Wilbur smiling down at him, his hand curled around the cup. “Mind if I join you?”

“No, I don’t mind,” he said, blinking and purposely looking away from the TV.

Wilbur plopped down in the booth seat across from him and took a sip of his coffee. The man was still wearing his work apron, some coffee stains on it here and there. But under that, he wore brown pants and a yellow sweater. “Got a favorite hero, Tommy?” Wilbur asked unexpectedly, glancing up at him and the TV he had been looking at.

“Oh, I don’t have a favorite. Why?” He thought it would be suspicious if he said he hated them. Even though it was the truth he might get put on a list somewhere. Heroes were the ones to take his free will away and forced him to start medical training before he even hit puberty.

Wilbur scoffed out a laugh. “Everyone has a favorite,” he said, raising an eyebrow at him. “And you were glaring at that TV like it personally wronged you.”

Tommy winced, he didn’t think his staring was that obvious. He quickly recovered, though, and plastered on a cheeky grin. “Maybe the TV *did* wrong me, Wilbur.”

“Oh?”

“Yep, the TV murdered my family,” Tommy declared, smiling when Wilbur rolled his eyes. “It’s true.”

Technically it could be true, for all he knows he doesn’t have parents. With his resources, he could probably figure it out, but he was too afraid of what he might find. “That’s terrible!” Wilbur gasped, playing along.

“It is, it is,” he laughed, drinking some of his own coffee, ignoring Wilbur’s look of disgust at the black coffee.

“So you really don’t have a favorite hero? Why?” Wilbur inquired after a moment of silence. There was something unreadable on his face as he looked at Tommy. He didn’t know whether it was a good or bad thing.

Tommy shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t really like any of them is all.”

Wilbur studied his expression for a moment before leaning forward with a mischievous glint in his eye. “Favorite villain?”

At that, Tommy scoffed, shaking his head. “That’s like asking me who my favorite serial killer is- oh wait, it is,” he deadpanned, leveling Wilbur a flat look. “They make my job hard enough already,” he muttered, taking a sip of his coffee again.

Wilbur had an odd look on his face that only morphed into curiosity. “You have a job?”

Tommy raised an eyebrow at him. “No, I have money and no job,” he said sarcastically. “Yes, I do,” he added after a moment.

“Oh, where do you work?” Wilbur hummed conversationally, glancing out the window.

Tommy knew the question was coming, but he didn’t know how to answer. He looked away, avoiding eye contact while he tried to think of how to get him out of talking about his job.

He opened his mouth, ready with an answer before the sound of a phone ringing went off near him, making him jump. Tommy fumbled for his phone in his pocket and picked it up, holding it to his ear without looking at the caller ID.

“Hello?” He said, avoiding Wilbur’s gaze that was definitely still focused on him.

“Tommy!” Niki’s panicked voice came through the other side. Tommy stood up from the booth, electing to ignore Wilbur’s growing look of concern. “There was a shooting downtown. I know it’s your day off but we’re understaffed. We can’t- we can’t heal them all.”

“Niki, calm down. I’m on my way,” he said, putting his jacket back on, he didn’t even remember taking it off.

“Okay,” Niki breathed, sighing before she hung up.

He turned and Wilbur opened his mouth to say something but Tommy cut him off. “Sorry, emergency.”

Wilbur caught onto his rising panic and nodded understandingly.

Tommy ran out the door, his footsteps thundering in his ears as he booked it to the hospital.

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The next time Tommy saw Wilbur he was extremely exhausted. It was the weekend again and he got a coffee like he did last time. Wilbur was looking at him with something like worry.

“Are you alright, Tommy? Did the emergency get taken care of okay?” Wilbur asked as he popped the lid onto the coffee cup, sliding it over to be set in front of him.

Tommy nodded sluggishly, he had woken up tired and couldn’t go back to sleep with a dark crimson color burned into his brain.

Wilbur only pursed his lips and Tommy paid. After that, he wandered over to his usual table and put his head down.

Occasionally, he peeked over where he laid head on his arms on the table, unable to relax.

Several minutes passed by and a familiar apron-clad man sat across from him, sipping from his own drink. Tommy turned his head up to blink at Wilbur who was studying him with something like worry.

“Hey, Tommy,” he said softly, tilting his head at him

“Hi, Wi’b’r,” Tommy mumbled, fidgeting with the frayed end of his blue cardigan. It was another thing Tubbo had made for him. He made it big and baggy, hoping Tommy would grow into it more and put ‘some meat on his bones’ once they settled into their house. He still hasn’t grown into it.

“You seem exhausted,” Wilbur commented, frowning slightly.

“Amazing observation, genius,” he huffed sarcastically, glaring up at the man as he rested his chin on his arm.

Wilbur’s frown deepened and he hunched down a little to meet Tommy’s eyes. “You getting enough sleep?”

Tommy raised an eyebrow at him. “Yes, *mom*, I’m getting... enough sleep.”

Wilbur chuckled lightly and leaned back in his seat, sipping his coffee. “Speaking of,” he started, setting his cup down on the table. Tommy felt a little anxious at the idea of talking about anything that had to do with what he had just said. “How do your parents feel about you going out and buying coffee only to fall asleep at a bakery surrounded by strangers?”

Pursing his lips, Tommy turned his head away, trying to think of any way to avoid answering his questions. “I wasn’t sleepin’.”

Wilbur seemed to notice his change of topic. Now, most people who knew Tommy well enough, knew that he was stubborn, especially about personal things and therefore would drop it quickly. *Though sometimes, Tommy wonders if they give up trying to help him simply because they don’t care enough.* Wilbur, however, doesn’t know him very well and decides to push the subject. “Tommy, are your parents... taking care of you? Do they even know you’re here?”

Tommy scowled at him, pursing his lips as he thought of something to say, a lie, maybe. He knew he should lie, say that his parents are taking care of him and that they know he’s spending his free time dissociating in a bakery booth. Tommy looked up to meet the concerned frown on Wilbur’s face and for some reason, his mouth didn’t form the words.

Wilbur seemed to recognize his silence as an answer in itself and dragged his hands down his face. “Tell me that you have *someone* taking care of you, at least,” he pleaded, lowering his head to look Tommy in the eyes again.

Tommy’s scowl melted into more of a defeated frown and he sighed. “I don’t need anyone takin’ care of me,” he huffed, thinking of Tubbo. Though Tubbo was only a few months older than him, so he didn’t really count as someone who can take care of him. Especially because Tubbo had himself to take care of, Tommy didn’t want to burden the boy any more than he already had.

“Yes, you do. You’re still a kid,” Wilbur countered, nudging his arm with his knuckles gently to prompt Tommy to look at him. “I can see it from here, you’re exhausted. More than a child

your age should be.”

“I’m not a child,” Tommy scoffed, thinking of all the bodies he’s watched get bagged and wheeled away. Failure after failure is all his mind is muddled with, though in reality, he does save lives. But, he can’t help but see all the times he hasn’t been able to save someone. A responsibility he’s had to carry for longer than he can remember. “Turned sixteen a couple months ago,” he added, hoping it would add to his case but it only made Wilbur sadder.

“You *are* a child, Tommy. The bags under your eyes are more prominent than my father’s, I don’t even know how that’s possible.”

Tommy smirked, grateful for an opportunity to crack a joke. “Thanks for pointing it out, dickhead.”

“You said you work, but you didn’t end up telling me what your job is—”

“HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE HERE A DOCTOR?” A loud shout interrupted Wilbur, who turned his head toward the commotion. A woman was standing at the entrance of the bakery, carrying a small child in her trembling hands. “Please! He’s- I think my son is dying or- or having a heart attack. I don’t know!”

Tommy jumped up from his seat, purposefully avoiding Wilbur’s confused protest as he ran over to the woman. Several customers were surrounding her, some ran outside to shout at people on the street for help. Wilbur followed after Tommy, hands hovering like he wanted him to stay back.

“Is there a doctor?” The mother asked again desperately, setting her toddler on the floor and looking for a sign of him breathing.

“I’m a doctor,” Tommy announced firmly, pushing through the crowd of people to kneel beside the child. The mother looked up at him with a confused glare.

“You’re a kid! This isn’t- this isn’t a joke!” She shouted, bringing her toddler closer to her and keeping Tommy away from him.

Tommy rolled his eyes and grabbed his ID to his hospital out from where it hung under his shirt, and shoved it in her face for her to see. She hesitated for a moment before nodding sheepishly, putting her child back flat on the floor in front of them. Gasps and whispers filled the room at the sight of the child doctor, Tommy knew it well. Even his own patients asked him to see his ID, even when clad in his full lab coat and scrubs.

The first thing Tommy did was check the kid’s pulse, pressing his fingers against the toddler’s neck. His heart was seemingly stopped, but the kid was making harsh stuttered sounds that could be mistaken for breathing. But Tommy knew better.

“He’s gone into cardiac arrest,” Tommy explained, already placing his hands over one another on the toddler’s chest above his heart. The woman looked even more panicked now and he understood she probably didn’t know what a cardiac arrest entailed or what he was doing. “Starting CPR.”

As he counted in his head as he started chest compressions. He faintly heard Wilbur on the phone, presumably calling an ambulance like the people crowding him should be.

*One*

*Two*

*Three*

*Four*

*Five*

The mother of the child held the toddler's hand, whispering jumbled words that sounded like an old prayer.

*Six*

*Seven*

*Eight*

More people began to crowd around as sirens blared in the distance.

*Nine*

*Ten*

*Eleven*

*Twelve*

Wilbur was off of the phone now and he started shooing people away, shouting at the ones getting too close.

*Thirteen*

*Fourteen*

*Fifteen*

*Sixteen*

*Seventeen*

The other pink haired bakery employee heard the commotion and his eyes widened at the sight. He blinked and quickly joined Wilbur in yelling at people to back up.

*Eighteen*

*Nineteen*

*Twenty*

The sirens of ambulances were closer, but not close enough. Every second that ticked by Tommy's heart sunk even more.

*Twenty-one*

*Twenty-two*

*Twenty-three*

The mother of the child began to sob and squeezed the toddler's hand desperately, people watching from afar.

*Twenty-four*

*Twenty-five*

*Twenty-six-*

A gasp. The toddler's heart started back up and he coughed and took in heaving breaths. Tommy backed up a little, slumping in relief as his adrenaline crashed. The mother of the toddler cried and pulled her son into a hug, fingers curling in the fabric of his shirt. The toddler calmed down significantly and wept as the ambulance pulled up.

"He might have a broken rib or two now," Tommy informed the woman, though it was all out of habit. He felt disconnected, almost like he did when he was at work. But it seemed different since he wasn't *actually* at the hospital. He had no time to even mentally prepare.

The mother seemed to remember who saved her son's life and started thanking him profusely, rocking the wailing child in her arms gently.

Two first responders jumped out of the ambulance. A paramedic and EMT; he recognized by the different badges on their uniform. They rushed into the bakery, assessing the problem. Tommy stood up and made his way over to them, his hands had long since stopped shaking in situations like these, but this time felt different.

Much like many other people, they overlooked him at first and went straight to the mother and son in front of him. Tommy held up his hospital ID to the EMT and she looked shocked for a moment but listened when he spoke.

"The toddler went into cardiac arrest, I administered CPR and his heart started back up before I had to do rescue breathing. Probably has a broken rib or two," he reported, looking as the paramedic helped the child into the ambulance, preparing to take their vitals.

The EMT nodded and looked hesitant to move, before she eventually sighed and asked the question he knew was coming. "How did they take you so young?"

Tommy sighed, looking over to where a police car had pulled up and an officer was talking to Wilbur with a notepad in hand. The brunette looked slightly annoyed and Tommy pocketed



that to ask him about the conversation later. When he would probably have to explain himself... “My parents... uh I-,” he started quietly, fidgeting with his ID. “I just don’t have any... and when I developed my powers in the orphanage they weren’t there to protect my rights. So I started training and taking medical classes instead of... my elementary ones...”

The EMT nodded in sympathy, frowning. “I’m sorry,” she muttered, patting his shoulder. She was older, maybe in her late thirties or early forties, but she definitely was old enough to know the way they got in doctors and nurses as young as Tommy.

“It’s not your fault,” he sighed again, crossing his arms.

“I know,” she whispered, grabbing the radio that sat on her belt to phone in to whatever emergency response agency she belonged to. She seemed like she wanted to say more but was interrupted by the paramedic calling her name. Nodding politely to him, she rushed off toward the ambulance.

Tommy sighed again and crossed his arms, being reminded of the cold feeling as he watched the EMT get in the ambulance and take off. The sirens going off and lights flaring again.

He flinched when a hand landed on his shoulder, and much like the time with Niki, Wilbur looked disturbed by his reaction. It quickly faded into worry as he tilted his head at him. “Hey, Tommy. Are you okay?”

Tommy nodded, his limbs feeling heavy as he just stood there. He felt tired but he had no desire to sleep.

“I-” Wilbur paused, when Tommy looked up at him in the eyes he seemed like he was trying to find the right words. “How are you a doctor?” He asked dumbly, his hands grounding Tommy where they were placed on his shoulders.

“Well, I didn’t choose to be a doctor... They take in people with healing powers to be in the medical field. Normally, they aren’t as young as me but...” he trailed off, looking down at the tile floor sheepishly.

“Who’s ‘they’, Tommy?” Wilbur questioned darkly, suddenly bitter. Tommy shrunk under the anger in his gaze and Wilbur quickly noticed, softening his tense stance.

“Technically the government did. But, it was the Hero Institute that made the suggestion for it to be the law,” Tommy explained, untensing as the sirens were too far to hear anymore. “We are more useful healing people than anything else, apparently.”

Wilbur looked *livid*, staring at Tommy with a certain distance, like he was plotting a murder in very specific detail. “They just *took* you?”

“Uh, yeah,” Tommy said, blinking in exhaustion. He was too tired to hear the angry determination in Wilbur’s voice. “An’ I didn’t really have any parents to fight for my rights so... they just kinda had me taking classes on how to save lives when I should’ve been learning cursive.”

The police officer must've put Wilbur in a bad mood, because his reaction was a lot more upset than Tommy was expecting. "I- I'm so sorry that's terrible," he said softly, snapping out of his rage-filled stupor. "You shouldn't even have to be working a job like that at your age."

"It's just how it is," Tommy shrugged, looking around to see the pink haired employee escorting people out of the bakery and flipped the 'closed' sign early.

"Well, it shouldn't be that way," Wilbur said firmly, eyeing the ID badge hanging around Tommy's neck. "You look tired," he noted, gently patting his shoulder. "Do you... you do have a safe place to sleep, right?"

Tommy nodded again and smiled a little.

"Alright, I think you should go home and get some rest. Do you walk home?"

"Yeah, I do."

Wilbur pursed his lips. "I could drive you home," he offered, tilting his head at him. "There's lots of crime in this area and... I don't think it'd be safe for you to walk home by yourself."

Tommy scoffed, waving a dismissive hand at him. "I'll be fine. Criminals know not to fuck with me 'cause I'm a big man. All intimidating 'nd shit."

Wilbur sighed, a fond smile taking over the frown on his face. "Okay... just be careful."

"I will," he huffed, putting his hands in his pockets and walking to the door.

Then he was walking out, the chilly air hitting his face. Tommy went home feeling a little warmer than usual.

## Chapter End Notes

yo! theres the first chapter! let me know what you think about it so far in the comments!  
i love reading them:)

# the shadows in your head

## Chapter Summary

“That’s sad.”

Glitch huffed out a laugh, shaking his head. “What’s sad is a child walking around at midnight with a faraway stare on his face.”

Tommy pursed his lips, wrapping his shivering arms around himself. “I was... thinking.”

“Sure you were,” he said sarcastically. “Just like the man in the alley a couple buildings down was thinking about kidnapping you.”

Tommy whirled his head up to gape at him. “What!?”

## Chapter Notes

// dissociation, a literal murder (mentioned not in detail)

wilbur pov for most this one >:)

also alliumduo crumbs near the end 🙄

BTW i changed my username and rebranded from MelodicDiscord, so uhh yeah. and no i totally did not get inspiration for my new name from george's hero name 🙄

chapter title from [Butterfly's Repose by Zabawa](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur is an empath. Now, not in the narcissistic way, but rather in the literal sense. He can sense other people's emotions and twist them to his advantage if he wanted to.

In fights with heroes, he uses his power to dig deep and take the most painful emotion and force it to the surface, amplifying it.

It was one of the reasons they called him Tragedy. His ability to bring down even the strongest of heroes with their own feelings.

But, what most people didn't know was his power didn't only affect negative emotions, but positive ones as well.

He remembered the first time his powers started to develop, he and his twin brother, Technoblade, were eight years old. Their mother's death had affected them terribly, especially their father who had lost his spark. The man with hopes and dreams and a heart of gold, deteriorated to a shell.

So when Wilbur sleepily stumbled out of his shared bedroom to find his father crying, he was worried. Phil hadn't noticed his presence until Wilbur asked him what was wrong, frowning at the poor state his father was in.

Phil had eventually calmed himself down enough to tell Wilbur to go back to bed, voice cracking. He had never heard his father like that, and it made something in Wilbur's chest tighten.

Then, like he was never sad at all, Phil stopped crying, tears halting in their tracks as his breathing leveled. Phil was in shock for several moments before he connected the dots and looked to Wilbur who had a small hand on his arm.

At the time, Wilbur had no idea of his power and had unknowingly flooded Phil with positive emotions, not leaving room for the pain.

After a long moment, Phil smiled lightly and pulled his son into his arms, whispering reassurances that he was okay. That everything was okay.

Wilbur had been confused then, but didn't mind the affection, simply wrapping his arms around his father in return.

Later, he would realize just how much trust he had been given and how much it truly meant.

...

That being said, Wilbur had seen and felt many emotions that weren't his own. Sometimes it got overwhelming, but he had his father and Techno to help keep him in check.

So to say Tommy surprised him would be an understatement. The boy was a mess, his emotions were jumbled and didn't correlate with the expression on his face. Though most of the time, Wilbur caught the boy with a faraway look and a numb feeling blocking away any discernible emotion.

It worried and unsettled him that someone as young as Tommy felt so empty all the time. So he took to bothering the kid every time he strolled into the bakery with false bravado and his chest puffed up like he had something to prove (he probably did).

...

"Hey, Tommy!" He greeted cheerily, waving at the blonde boy who seemed hesitant to approach the counter.

"Hi, Wilbur," Tommy mumbled, looking at anything but him. "I'll have my usual coffee..."

Wilbur nodded, not letting the overwhelming dread that swirled in Tommy's gut affect his countenance. Wilbur had a few guesses as to what Tommy could feel so anxious about, it was practically the elephant in the room: he was far too young to be a doctor.

In a fit of rage at the unfairness, Wilbur had scoured and searched for any hint at who could've been the one who suggested children work in the medical field. It was already a traumatizing job as is for even the strongest willed adults.

In the end, he turned up empty-handed, the details of the debated law oddly vague and unknown.

"How are you today?" Wilbur asked, trying to not let his eyes linger on the dark bags under the boy's eyes.

Tommy still seemed tense, fidgeting with his hands. "Fine," he said after a moment, rocking on his feet and looking around at the quiet customers sitting far away at tables of their own, indulged in work of some kind.

"Are you sure?" Wilbur asked, knowing that his answer was a lie.

Tommy pursed his lips and stared at him for a moment, emotions swirling with confliction. "Yeah, I'm sure."

Wilbur raised an eyebrow at him but handed him his coffee nonetheless, taking Tommy's card and scanning it. They stood in awkward silence while the machine processed the transaction.

After getting his card back, Tommy walked right over to his usual booth and sat down, resting his head on his arms like he always did. Wilbur went back to work, thinking of how he could settle the helplessness in his gut.

...

Wilbur's break came around and he gladly took it, smiling at his boss who only rolled her eyes at him fondly. "Picking up a stray, are you?" Puffy mused, making Wilbur pause where he was going to go harass Tommy.

"Is it that obvious?"

Puffy chuckled, her apron covered in flour and smears of frosting as she wiped her hands on it. She looked up at him with a considerate smile and migrated to wash her hands in the sink. "You're a lot like your father, you know."

Wilbur raised an eyebrow at her, not decided on if he was going to take it as a compliment or not yet. Though the calm, easiness radiating off of her made him think he should.

She shook her head, grinning. "Make sure the kid eats something, he looks too small," she said, turning back to the batch of cookies she was making. Although she didn't answer his question, he knew what she meant. Phil had known Puffy for a long time, they've been

friends since... well before he could remember. But she always understood Wilbur and was always there when he needed her.

"I will," he assured her, grabbing his jacket on his way out. He spotted Tommy in his booth again, phone on the table in front of him, buzzing with notifications he wasn't answering. "Hey," he said, nudging Tommy to look up at him.

Immediately he was hit with a wave of anxiety from Tommy who grinned up at him, contrasting with his mood. "Come to bother me again, Wilbur? Can't you see I'm busy?"

Wilbur laughed, shrugging on his jacket. "Yes, I'm so sorry for interrupting you," he snarked sarcastically. "You are clearly very busy ignoring your text messages."

He gestured to Tommy's phone and the anxious feeling grew with an added annoyance. "It's just my roommate," he grumbled, swiping up on his phone to turn on 'do not disturb'. "What'd you want anyway?"

Wilbur frowned but didn't want to push it, he already made the mistake of grilling Tommy about his job the weekend prior. He didn't want to cross the line by asking him about his roommate as well. "I was wondering if you wanted something from the sandwich place down the street."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed and his expression turned into one of surprise and confusion. "Why?" He asked dumbly, emotions changing too fast to recognize one in particular.

"Well, it's my lunch break and I thought I'd get you something too while you're here," he explained with a display of casual nonchalance.

Tommy just stared at him for a moment, the fog not as prominent in his eyes while focused on him. He turned his head away and looked down at his hands that were clasped together in front of him. "Oh no, you don't have to get me anything."

"I know that," Wilbur said, a teasing lilt to his voice. "But I want to."

Tommy looked back at him with flickering apprehension. "It's fine, really. I- I don't even know what I would get," he excused, waving a dismissive hand at him.

Luckily for Tommy, Wilbur was nothing if not persistent. "Come with me then, you can see the menu that way," he offered, though it gave less room for avoidance. "It's not too far, it's lunchtime anyway and I don't think you've had a single thing all day other than that coffee," he said, gesturing lightly to the empty cup in front of Tommy.

Tommy sighed, though it could be mistaken for exasperation, Wilbur could practically *see* the hope thrumming between the hesitance. "Fine," he relented, shooting Wilbur a half-hearted glare.

Wilbur grinned at him as he stood up and followed him to the door, tossing his empty cup in the trash on their way out.

The biting cold of autumn hit them as orange leaves blew past their feet on the sidewalk. Tommy walked beside Wilbur as he led him in the direction of the sandwich shop, hands in the pockets of his jacket.

The sky was grayed out but Wilbur couldn't help but find the coolness refreshing, contrasting from the warmth of the bakery. Tommy seemed to feel the opposite, an irritated frown on his face as he gazed at the clouds.

"It's going to rain soon," Wilbur commented absentmindedly, his elbow occasionally bumping into Tommy's with how closely they walked.

Tommy turned his head and gave him an odd look. "How do you know that?"

Wilbur shrugged, bunching his hands into the fabric in his pockets to keep them from the cold nipping at his fingers. "I can smell it," he said simply, smiling when Tommy gave him a suspicious look, fighting against the curiosity he was emitting.

"You can *smell* the rain coming," Tommy deadpanned, disbelief obvious on his face.

"Yep," he said, smirking at Tommy's eyeroll. "It smells like worms."

"Worms?"

"Mhm. Can't you smell it?"

"No," Tommy scoffed, crossing his arms in annoyance, though Wilbur felt the amusement coming from him.

"Why not?" Wilbur hummed, putting his hand light on Tommy's shoulder to slow him to a stop as they approached a crosswalk.

"'Cause I'm not a fuckin'... nerd," he huffed, giving him an odd look at the gesture, though he didn't comment on it.

"Right," Wilbur chuckled, his hand falling back to his side as the crosswalk light turned to green, illuminating the stick figure on the sign.

He guided Tommy through the busy sidewalk, looking for the familiar sign of the sub sandwich shop he was looking for. Passing a particularly loud family, Wilbur turned to make a joke about it, only to find Tommy wilted, watching the family with well-hidden jealousy and something much more somber. But most notably, the faraway stare was back.

"I hate anteaters," he declared abruptly, catching Tommy and even himself a little off guard with the randomness of the statement. Instead of the sad feeling he had before, Tommy was now looking at him with that same amusement he had when teasing him. "They are the worst animal ever."

"Why's that?" Tommy prompted, raising an eyebrow at him.

Wilbur smiled, Tommy had no idea what was coming.

...

“-example you wouldn’t call me a ‘burger eater’ because I eat *burgers* . I mean think about it if-”

“Wilbur,” Tommy interrupted, still laughing. “Is this the place?”

Wilbur paused, turning to look up at the sandwich place they arrived at. “Oh, yeah,” he said, pushing the door open while Tommy followed.

The worker noticed them almost immediately, waving them over to the counter with a polite greeting. Wilbur ordered right away while Tommy stared at the menu blankly. Wilbur frowned and nudged his arm.

“Tommy, do you know what you want to order?” He asked softly, ignoring the awkward presence of the worker.

Tommy blinked and made eye contact with him again, coming back into focus. “Huh?”

“Your order?” Wilbur prompted, jerking his thumb in the direction of the menu and the worker.

“Right, sorry,” he mumbled, eyes darting around the menu to find something quickly, anxiety bubbling under the surface. “I’ll have the... the grilled cheese.”

Wilbur smiled and the worker nodded, typing it in. They looked up and told Wilbur the price, who went to grab his wallet out of his pocket. Tommy stopped him with a scoff.

“I’m paying,” Tommy said plainly, taking his own wallet out, determination flooding his movements.

“What? No!” Wilbur pushed his hands away, fumbling for his wallet. “I am not letting a *child* pay for my food.”

Tommy rolled his eyes at him, taking his card out, he pointed to himself. “Doctor salary,” he jabbed Wilbur in the chest with his index finger. “Bakery boy salary. I’m paying.”

Wilbur sputtered, not knowing how to combat that. There wasn’t really a way to tell Tommy that he had plenty of money from all the crimes he committed and all the rich people he stole from. “Tommy, I’m not letting you-”

“Take it,” Tommy said, shoving his card in the worker’s face, who was gaping at them in confusion. They hesitantly took his card and scanned it as Wilbur crossed his arms and pouted.

“I offered to buy *you* food in the first place, not the other way around,” he huffed, narrowing his eyes at Tommy’s victorious grin. “I don’t want a *child* paying for my food.”

“You’re whining and complaining much like a child would right about now, Wilbur,” Tommy smirked, laughing as Wilbur pursed his lips in defeat.



“I am not,” he countered weakly, his scowl was quickly overtaken by a smile from Tommy’s genuine happiness.

“Uh-huh, sure Wilbur.”

“Whatever, let’s just find a table to sit at,” Wilbur grumbled lightheartedly, already dragging Tommy over to a booth.

“The guy with pink hair,” Tommy started, his question coming out of the blue. “Is he your friend?”

Wilbur raised an eyebrow at him before bursting out into a fit of laughter, earning him an odd look from Tommy. “I’m afraid I don’t have a choice in our friendship,” he chuckled. “He’s my twin brother.”

Tommy’s jaw dropped. “What?! I would’ve never guessed.”

“Yeah, we don’t look a lot alike when he’s got his hair dyed like it is,” he shook his head fondly, reminiscent.

“Why does he dye his hair?”

“‘Cause he likes it, I guess,” Wilbur shrugged, leaning back in the booth seat he decided on. “That’s just what he says though, I think it’s so he can pretend he doesn’t know me in public.”

“So what you’re saying is, your brother is embarrassed to be associated with you,” Tommy concluded with a taunting grin.

“Pfft, I am *not* embarrassing. He’s just a wimp.”

“Really?” Tommy raised an eyebrow. “He looked like he could pick you up and break you over his knee.”

Wilbur gasped in offense, putting his hand over his heart. “That’s just not true, I would beat him in a fight.”

“Sure you would, whatever you say, Wilbur.”

“I would I-”

He was promptly interrupted by the worker setting their food down in front of them.

...

Several things happened after, Tommy learned more about Wilbur, his interests, his family. He grew more comfortable around the man with every second that passed, finding that Wilbur understood him. He *understood* his lighthearted jabs and his quiet moments of detachment. It was refreshing.

In turn, Wilbur learned a little more about him, Tubbo, and very vague things about Niki and his job. Though he didn't like talking about his work very much, especially seeing Wilbur get so sad about his situation.

After they ate, Wilbur walked him back to the bakery where Tommy stayed for an hour or so more. This time, he sat closer to where Wilbur worked, bothering the man about random things behind the counter. He always got a patient and funny answer, making him smile a lot more than he had in a long time.

But, all good things come to an end eventually, and Wilbur had to close up shop. Tommy whined the whole time and Wilbur just assured him he would be there the next day and the day after and so on.

By the time Wilbur was locking the doors the sun was nearing the horizon, orange-blue hues painting the sky. Tommy almost forgot that the sun sets earlier in the colder seasons because it's already dark by the time he goes to work.

Wilbur put a hand on his shoulder, making him flinch where he was absorbed by staring at the sunset. It was only a little obstructed by a few buildings, but it was still too beautiful not to watch. Wilbur retracted his hand and followed his gaze, not mentioning his jumpiness, which Tommy was thankful for.

"It's pretty, innit?" Wilbur hummed, his keys jangling as he stuffed them blindly into his pocket.

"Yeah, it is."

Wilbur turned to look at him with something somber before his phone buzzed and his attention was diverted to it. He clicked his tongue in annoyance and pocketed his phone once more, frowning. "I'm sorry, Tommy. My dad wants me home early."

"It's okay. I can walk home just fine on my own, y'know," Tommy said with a slight smile, stuffing his hands in his pockets to protect them from the biting numbness of the frigid air.

"Are you sure? I mean I don't think my father would mind if I drove you home," Wilbur offered, eyes glancing up at the dimming light of the sky. "It's not safe for a child to be walking around in the dark. This area's full of crime."

Tommy scoffed. "I told you already, I'm a big man. I scare off all the criminals with my muscles."

Wilbur rolled his eyes and sighed in defeat. "Alright, just- here," he took out his phone and gestured for Tommy to take his out as well. "Let me give you my number so you can call me anytime you feel unsafe."

Tommy furrowed his eyebrows, reluctantly handing Wilbur his phone with the contacts open. "If I ever felt unsafe, Tubbo would probably be the scariest person to call, I hate to break it to you," Tommy teased, his laughter dying off a little bit at Wilbur's serious expression. It was

something so different than what he had seen all day, a look that said he could kill. But Tommy highly doubted that.

“I mean it, Tommy. If you even think for even a *second* you might not be safe, don’t hesitate to call me. Any hour, I don’t mind.”

Tommy stared at him, trying to figure him out. Wilbur handed him his phone back with his contact now in it, not mentioning that there were only a few other people on his phone. Tommy wanted to crack another joke, say how he was a big man who could handle anything. But something about Wilbur’s stance and tone threw him off. It almost made Wilbur seem... intimidating. “I- okay, I will,” he assured, nodding.

In hindsight, he probably wouldn’t, but if it made Wilbur feel better that he told him he would, then he would say he would. Wilbur’s demeanor softened dramatically, an easy smile on his face as he leaned forward and ruffled his hair. Tommy found himself not flinching at the contact, but rather it made him feel something safe and calm. “Thank you, Tommy,” Wilbur grinned, stepping back away from him in the direction of his car. “Be careful.”

“Bye!” He waved, watching as Wilbur jogged over to his car and hopped in. Tommy turned away and stared at the ground as he walked, confused. All the interactions he had with Wilbur previously weren’t weird in the slightest, but that made him think.

Maybe Wilbur just pitied the orphan boy forced to work too early. Tommy frowned, he hoped their friendship was more than that. It seemed so genuine when they laughed together and made snickering comments about a particularly rude customer that insulted Wilbur.

It made him get stuck in his thoughts for longer than usual.

...

When Tommy focused back to reality it was to a masked face staring back at him, a foot away from his face. He jumped with a shriek, falling back onto the sidewalk, immediately regretting it as his cold, dry hands scraped painfully against the concrete in an effort to catch himself.

Tommy barely recognized the vigilante that stood in front of him, their posture almost *nervous* as they towered over him. “What the fuck! Don’t scare a man like that,” he grumbled, standing up and patting himself off.

“Sorry,” the vigilante- *Glitch* he remembered his name from the news, tilted his head at him. “What’s a... kid like you doing walking around so late at night?” Glitch asked, his hands behind his back as he leaned down to meet his eyes.

“M not a kid,” he snapped, belatedly remembering who he was talking to. Someone who could probably rip him to shreds if he really felt like it. “Uh- I just got a little... distracted?”

“Well, let’s get you home. I’m sure there’s someone *very* worried about you right now,” he muttered, putting a phone away that Tommy hadn’t even noticed he had out.

Glitch put his hand on Tommy's back and turned him around, already walking in the direction of where he needed to go. Tommy rubbed his hands together, frowning at the marks that were already healing up.

"Don't you have anything better to do than lead me home?" Tommy asked, turning his head up to give the vigilante a skeptical look.

Dark, purple eyes stared back at him, glowing in the dark eerily. "Not really," he hummed, moving his hands to clasp together behind his back.

"That's sad."

Glitch huffed out a laugh, shaking his head. "What's sad is a child walking around at midnight with a faraway stare on his face."

Tommy pursed his lips, wrapping his shivering arms around himself. "I was... thinking."

"Sure you were," he said sarcastically. "Just like the man in the alley a couple buildings down was *thinking* about kidnapping you."

Tommy whirled his head up to gape at him. "What!?"

"Don't worry, he's not a problem now."

Tommy just looked at him with a mortified look, walking a few steps away from him. Glitch rolled his eyes.

"He's not dead... yet."

"Wha- you can't-"

"I'm joking," Glitch deadpanned, a clear smile on his face behind his mask. "I killed him already."

Tommy recoiled, frozen in fear and shock. "WHAT THE FUCK!"

Glitch paused, noticing that didn't ease his nerves in the slightest. "What!? He was a creep! I checked first," he said, trying to be reassuring as he held his hands out placatingly.

"How do you even- what?! You- you *killed* someone!"

"Yeah?"

Tommy took one look at him and took off running, his feet slamming against the ground drowned out the sounds of Glitch's shouts.

...

He eventually got tired of running and slowed to a walk, looking behind him nervously for a flash of purple and black. Tommy could swear Glitch was following him, hearing the sound

of him teleporting every once in a while, but he wasn't sure if it was just his imagination trying to scare him or not.

Tommy finally made it to his house and collapsed against the door, numb fingers scrambling for his keys. In the end, he didn't have to unlock the door before he was falling inside, Tubbo shaking him by the shoulders and scolding him.

“-scared the shit out of me again! Tommy, do you even know how long you were gone, not answering my texts?!”

“I'm sorry, Tubbo,” he breathed, taking in the warm air as Tubbo locked the front door behind him, clicking several deadbolts in place.

“I thought we established this already! Never do that again,” Tubbo grumbled, moving to stand in front of Tommy. “What... what happened? You seem out of breath.”

“I-” Tommy cut himself off, his exhaustion hitting him tenfold as his adrenaline crashed. “I'm tired.”

Tubbo frowned but didn't push it, only taking to guide him up to his room.

Once he made it to his bed, he threw himself on the bed, crawling under the covers, trembling from the bone-chilling cold and the heaviness of his limbs weighing him down.

“Goodnight, Tommy,” Tubbo whispered softly, flicking off the light and closing the door quietly.

...

Tommy eventually stopped shaking and was able to fall into a fitful sleep.

## Chapter End Notes

i decided i wanted to make ranboo a healthy mix between dsmp ranboo and osmp ranboo and here is what we got :)

ranboo: i killed a man

tommy, a doctor: WHAT THE FUCK

ranboo, an empath, sensing tommy is a little upset by this

uehg dialog heavy chapter. pacing is annoying

tell me your thoughts & theories :)

OH! and what you do think techno's powers are? (hint: it's not the expected super strength buffs) (hint #2: his villain name 'comedy' also relates to his power)

[my twitter](#)

# the world is a curse (it'll kill if you let it)

## Chapter Summary

Tommy has seen enough blood he doesn't normally get affected by the sight of it. But the amount he sees in a smear across the floor, almost like a dead body was dragged through the store, makes his stomach turn.

He followed the trail of blood to a hunched-over figure, barely moving. They're tall, Tommy can tell as much, with how their long legs stretch out in front of them in a mess, equally lanky arms clutching their chest.

When the person turns their head, Tommy's heart drops. A dramatic frown mask stares back at him, though the person behind it only barely registers his presence, head lulling against the wall where a mess of bloody handprints stain.

Tommy is frozen in place. Tragedy is bleeding out in front of his eyes.

## Chapter Notes

// blood+gore, injury, stab wound, fainting



tommy and tragedy interaction... maybe? :)

chapter title is a lyric from [High Enough by K.Flay](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was Sunday. Tommy knew this because he had a fun day out harassing Wilbur just the day before and he only did that on weekends. So he deducted today was Sunday and he had today to go back to hang out before he would have to sleep in preparation for a long week of working the nightshift.

Tommy got up from his bed, feeling a little more enthused to wake up than he usually would. Tommy isn't ashamed to admit it's because he's excited to bother Wilbur again.

Walking over to his dresser, he rifled through it, pulling out a sweater and some pants. He dreadfully put them on and looked to the door, listening. He heard the clanging of pots and pans and sighed. He would have to talk to Tubbo about last night, it seemed.

He took one look at his hair in the mirror and ran his hand through it a couple of times before deeming it public-worthy. Tommy opened his door and heard the movement from the kitchen pause, a shudder went down his spine. He hated how well Tubbo's hearing was.

He shuffled to the top of the staircase, settling his hand on the railing and sighing again. Tommy started down them, wincing at every creak that came from the wood under him.

Once he made it into the doorway of the kitchen, he stopped, leaning against it and watching Tubbo run about the room with something steaming on the stove. Tommy never understood how quickly he picked up cooking and baking, but he supposed it was one of the many talents the boy was just naturally good at. Tommy used to be jealous of how perfect Tubbo was at everything he did, but that bitterness dissipated with time, only grateful to have someone as amazing as Tubbo around. Not that he would ever tell him that.

"Good morning, Tommy," Tubbo greeted softly, turning his head to nod at him while he poured pancake batter onto a pan, an omelet cooking on another.

"Mornin'."

"Sleep well?"

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed as he thought about it. There was nothing particularly memorable about his sleep, he didn't remember the nightmares he got frequently, but he did feel the residual emotions from them. He didn't seem to have one last night, so he nodded, stuffing his hands in his pockets. "Yeah."

Tubbo put the batter bowl back down and dried his hands, turning to give Tommy a pinched look. "Tommy... I know you probably don't want to talk about it... but please? What happened last night? I- you worry me and I just..." he trailed off, giving him a hesitant look.

Tommy frowned, ducking his head sheepishly. "I'm sorry, Tubbo. I was just distracted and I got off track- took a wrong turn or something," he started, rocking on his heels. "I don't mean to worry you."

Tubbo pursed his lips, nodding. "I know you don't," he sighed, picking up a spatula and flipping the omelet. "But you do and I'd like to know what had you so scared when you got home."

Tommy crossed his arms and bit his lip, debating. Tubbo would surely freak out if he told him the truth about a vigilante following him home, talking about how he *killed* someone like a life was nothing to him. But he also felt the weight of Tubbo's eyes on him, anticipating his answer. He found he couldn't lie to him this time.

"Well, some vigilante approached me and I snapped out of... my thoughts and he started to bring me home," Tommy began, fidgeting with his fingers as Tubbo nodded encouragingly. "He kinda freaked me out," he admitted nervously, avoiding the concerned look on Tubbo's face. "Told me how he killed someone a few buildings down and... I ran."



At that, Tubbo's frown turned to something irritated and his grip tightened in the white towel he was holding. Tommy knew better than to think it was him he was mad at, but he still shrunk under his gaze.

"I think he followed me home- but I'm not sure."

Tubbo nodded again, this time in understanding and he all but threw the towel on the counter. "Don't worry, Tommy. If Glitch ever comes here I won't let him even *think* about scaring you again," Tubbo stated, oddly confident and determined. The phrasing of his words confused Tommy, like Tubbo thought the most harm the vigilante would do is scare him.

Tubbo then offered Tommy some breakfast, handing him a plate with an omelet cooked how he liked it. Changing the conversation quickly to lighten the mood.

Tommy didn't realize that he never told Tubbo the vigilante's name.

~ + ~

"Hi, Tommy!" Wilbur greeted, grinning at him as he entered the bakery feeling lighter, the weight on his shoulders about lying to Tubbo having been lifted.

"Hey, Wilbur!"

"You seem like you're in a good mood," he commented, already preparing a cup for Tommy's usual order.

"Yeah, I am, and I came to harass you."

"Well, it seems you're right on time because it's a minute to my lunch break," Wilbur said, glancing down at his phone. "I think there's a diner down the road we should try."

Tommy smiled. "Who said I was going with you?" He inquired playfully, raising an eyebrow.

Wilbur rolled his eyes. "Then you just don't have a choice, we are the best of friends now, resistance is futile."

Tommy let out a startled laugh, taking the seat close to the counter like he had the day prior as Wilbur poured his coffee. "Whatever you say, bakery boy."

Wilbur shot him a lighthearted glare out of the corner of his eyes. "What did I say about calling me 'bakery boy'?"

Tommy's grin turned into a smirk. "Okay then. Sorry, bakery bitch."

Wilbur gasped and made an offended noise, popping the lid of his coffee on. "Fine, I'll come up with some nickname to call you and you won't like it one bit," Wilbur huffed, hiding his

smile.

Tommy shook his head. “ *Sure* .”

Wilbur narrowed his eyes at him and shook his head again as he took off his apron. “Hey, Techno,” he called, cupping his hands around his mouth and yelling into the kitchen. The same pink-haired man from before, who Tommy learned was Wilbur's twin brother, poked his head out with flour on his hands and face. “I’m heading out.”

Techno nodded and brushed the flour off him before settling at the counter where Wilbur was. With a surge of confidence, Tommy waved to Techno before they left and he swore he saw a small smile creep on the man’s face before Wilbur was pushing him out the door.

...

They decided to go to a new place, this time, a small diner. They were greeted by the owner, a kind man named Sam who led them to a table. Wilbur told him he had never been there before and Tommy had only been once before with Tubbo, but he couldn’t remember it well.

From there they both talked about everything and nothing, bantering back and forth as usual. Tommy felt comfortable, unbothered by the hollow feeling that knocked on his mind constantly. It seemed Wilbur’s company made it bearable.

Then, of course, came the time when they had to go back to the bakery and Wilbur got to work again while Tommy sat nearby and talked. Wilbur responding and making casual conversation about something he was currently interested in.

Tommy always loved to hear about the things Wilbur enjoyed because it seemed like there was always something new he had to talk about. Something intriguing that Tommy had never heard about and encouraged Wilbur to explain it to him. The man would always get a flushed smile on his face before spouting off into a rant of some kind.

Tommy would listen intently, commenting here or there. At one point the conversation had hit a lull and the bakery was empty. Wilbur was sitting down behind the counter with a content smile on his face before it turned shy.

“You know,” Wilbur started quietly, fidgeting with his apron. “I don’t think I’ve ever been able to talk this much to someone about the things I like before. Not even to my own brother.”

“Why’s that?” Tommy hummed questioningly, resting his chin on his arms that were folded in front of him.

“Well, no one ever wants to listen,” he shrugged. “You’re the first person to engage in my ramblings.”

Tommy frowned, tilting his head a little to meet Wilbur’s eyes. “I like listening. You always have something interesting to say.”

Wilbur huffed out a little laugh, shaking his head fondly. “Not many people like listening to know-it-alls.”

“Whoever told you that you’re a know-it-all is just a bitch,” Tommy tsked, raising an eyebrow at Wilbur. “I’m not intimidated by people smarter than me.”

Wilbur scoffed. “I am *not* smarter than you, doctor.”

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, sitting up to cross his arms. “Oh puh-lease, I know about the body and that’s it. If you asked me a math equation more complicated than multiplication, I’d be fucked.”

Wilbur chuckled a little, something somber as he stared straight ahead, a thoughtful look on his face. “It’s unfair.”

“What? That you’re smarter than me? I’d hope so because you’re like *ancient* compared to me, so very old-”

“No,” Wilbur laughed, turning his head to look at him. “I mean it’s not fair that you didn’t get to go to school like everyone else. Learning how to save lives before long division.”

Tommy nodded, pursing his lips to keep them from contorting into a frown. “I know. But, there’s nothin’ anyone can do about it I suppose.”

Wilbur frowned and Tommy shrugged. Wilbur looked like he wanted to say something, but didn’t.

Tommy had come to peace with his fate a while ago. It was just something he had to deal with until the day he died. It wasn’t fair, but life wasn’t fair and life gave him the ability to heal. There wasn’t much else to it.

...

When Wilbur closed he looked really annoyed at the news from his father that he would have to go home early again the next few nights.

Tommy had waved off his worries, assuring him he could walk home by himself again before they said their goodbyes and departed.

Tommy felt happy.

~ + ~

A lamppost is out. That was the first thing Tommy noticed on his usual trek to the hospital, he hadn’t had the time to get a driver’s license. The walk is good for him anyway.

It was dark, however, and one of the lampposts he usually passed under was out, not illuminated in a soft orange glow. He only realized it because he used it as a landmark of when to take a left turn, to which he would continue to walk straight towards the hospital.

*Maybe someone will come and fix it soon*, he thought dully, wishing he could fall back into his mindless pattern where he can drone through the rest of the night without a thought, running off pure muscle memory alone.

But, something was keeping him aware, something was making him nervous. Something was *off* and it was nagging at his brain.

Tommy paused and looked behind him, expecting to see someone following him. He saw nothing.

Tommy continued to walk, hands in his pockets to keep the cold from numbing his fingers. He needs his hands functional to do his job properly and efficiently.

Tommy could go out and buy gloves, but he doesn't have the time. *That's not true, you have plenty of time, you just choose to make things harder for yourself*. Tommy willed the pesky voice away, clicking his tongue to fill the silence.

His feet crunched on some dark brown leaves that were blown out of the alleyway by a gust of wind. The ones he didn't step on brushed past his feet as Tommy breathed in the same polluted air, frowning.

The walk to the hospital was normally something he looked forward to, it was quiet and he could unfocus without worrying about not hearing an instruction or missing something on a patient. But now, the atmosphere was eerie and it sent a chill down his spine.

Tommy tightened his hand around his messenger bag, feeling the 'lunch' Tubbo packed him inside, next to his laptop. The jacket he wore over his white lab coat felt hollow and didn't warm his chilling bones in the slightest.

Everything set him on edge, the distant sound of cars buzzing and a rat scurrying out from behind a garbage bin make him flinch. Maybe it was Glitch following him home a few nights before, maybe it was how insistent Wilbur was about his safety, but he jumped at every little thing.

A crash made Tommy shriek, freezing where he stood as he tracked the sound to the corner store just a building down from him.

Tommy heard a thud and muffled curses, followed by a long, pained groan. He's heard it plenty of times before. Someone is terribly hurt.

Before he could think more about it, he's sprinting, his shoes stepping over broken glass and setting foot into the dark store.

Tommy listened for another sound, only to hear nothing but a quick, sloppy movement of someone sliding across the tile floor. The person was not only injured but also hiding from

him.

“Hello?” Tommy whispered, his voice cutting into the quiet of the room. He winced, taking another step as the person shifted. Then, a muffled sound that was quickly broken by a string of horrible, wet coughs.

Tommy rushed further inside in the direction he heard the noise, looking down every aisle. His feet squelched on something and he looked down as his eyes adjusted to the lighting. Blood was on the floor, and there was *so much* of it.

Tommy had seen enough blood that he doesn't normally get affected by the sight of it. But the amount he saw in a smear across the floor, almost like a dead body was *dragged* through the store, made his stomach turn.

He followed the trail of blood to a hunched-over figure, barely moving. They're tall, Tommy could tell as much, with how their long legs stretched out in front of them in a mess, equally lanky arms clutching their chest.

When the person turned their head, Tommy's heart dropped. A dramatic frown mask stared back at him, though the person behind it only barely registered his presence, head lulling against the wall where a mess of bloody handprints stain.

Tommy was frozen in place. *Tragedy* was bleeding out in front of his very eyes. There was a giant stab wound in his chest. Like a sword had gone straight through him and was pulled back out the way it came, blood drenching the villain's clothes and skin.

He knew he should turn around, leave him for dead. He'd most likely be found in the morning where the news will celebrate the hero's victory. Tommy felt bile rise in the back of his throat at the thought. *A hero had to have done this.*

Tommy just stood there for a moment, hands unclenching and clenching at his sides, willing him to do *something*. Then, “Mom?” Tragedy mumbled deliriously, trying and failing to lift his head up. His voice soft and heartbroken even behind the distortion of the voice changer.

Something about it made Tommy's heart shatter in his chest. The only time he had ever seen or heard of Tragedy was on the news, clips of him standing menacingly over suffering heroes. Or showing the aftermath of bloodbaths he participated in, the victims that came forward with stories of near-death experiences with the villain.

But here, Tommy only saw a human. A human who was actively *bleeding out*. He hurried forward, dropping to his knees next to Tragedy despite the blood soaking into his pants.

Tommy pulled what was left of Tragedy's shirt up, the fabric sticking to his skin as he lifted it to reveal some vital organs out of place. Blood seeped from the wound like a punctured egg yolk, spilling out of the gaping hole in his chest. Wincing, Tommy assessed the damage, absentmindedly reaching up to Tragedy's neck and checking his pulse. It was very faint and Tommy had to adjust his fingers to feel the muted thump of his heart.

Tommy hastily glanced around and realized they were in the medical aisle, next to some gauze. He frowned at the image of Tragedy trying to patch himself up with some measly bandages, only to bleed out internally a few minutes later. The thought brought on several more. *Did Tragedy have someone to take care of his wounds? Or did he suffer on with amateur stitches and poorly wrapped bandages?*

He grabbed a roll of gauze off the shelf and ripped through the plastic, unrolling it while wrapping it around his fingers a little. Tommy leaned over Tragedy more, wiping the debris away from the wound, a sick squishing sound coming from the blood. Tommy continued without faltering, wishing he had alcohol on him of some sort. Then he remembered, *right, medical aisle.*

Tommy's eyes darted around and landed on some rubbing alcohol nearby, he had to really reach over to grab it. His hands were slippery on the bottle, already covered in a slick layer of blood. Tommy popped the cap open and used his finger to puncture the aluminum foil sealing it.

His hands trembled as he dumped some on the wound. Tragedy's head jerked up more as he hissed in pain, slightly more aware as he tried to shove Tommy away. "Stop that," Tommy muttered, continuing to pour the alcohol and wipe away the bits of fabric and concrete that had somehow gotten into the wound.

The pain must've kicked up Tragedy's adrenaline again, because Tommy instantly felt a deplete in his mood, tears springing to his eyes at an unwelcome sadness.

"I'm trying to help you, dumbass!" He hissed halfheartedly, slapping away Tragedy's hovering hands and putting his own over the wound. "This is gonna feel a little weird," Tommy warned, mostly to keep himself talking and not focused on the emotions swirling around and confusing him.

Tommy took in a breath and began healing, watching as a white-blue glow came from his hands, stitching Tragedy's skin back together. Tragedy immediately slumped, muscles untensing as the blood closest to his skin retreated back to whence it came. The sad feeling slowly faded off with it.

Pressure started to build in Tommy's head and his limbs started to tingle. The wound was healing fine, but it ate up Tommy's energy faster than usual. He couldn't remember the last time he had to heal something as ugly as the wound in front of him in a while.

Tommy vaguely registered Tragedy regaining full consciousness, bloodied hands gently grabbing his own, trying to stop him. Tommy just grumbled something unintelligible and continued to heal him, a gut feeling telling him the inside damage was almost completely fixed.

A vicious pain racked its way through Tommy's nervous system, starting at his head and running down his spine. He shuddered and squeezed his eyes shut as things got blurry around him, the ground spinning.

Tommy's healing cut off and his muscles seized as the process stopped abruptly. One last glance at Tragedy told him he was as good as new, ignoring the wide eyes staring at him in shock behind the eyeholes of the mask.

Tommy leaned back against the aisle behind him, too weak to even move his hands up to rub at his temples. The pounding of his heart was like a drum in his ears as his vision pulsed with every beat.

Briefly, Tommy worried about what Tragedy would do once he got up, but his brain dragged him down, every muscle aching horribly.

Tommy felt the cold air from outside brush against his face again and shivered, his hands growing cold once more even with warm blood covering them. Then, the cold disappeared as he was pulled into a warm chest, long arms wrapping around him.

The person holding him stood and brought Tommy with them, cradling him close with his head tucked into their shoulder. Tommy belatedly realized this was Tragedy, the villain, whose hold he was sinking into. His mind didn't seem to care even as he blinked sluggishly up at the mask that had seemed so threatening on the news.

Tommy was dragged into unconsciousness, feeling strangely safe.

## Chapter End Notes

yoooo!!! so much happenin' this chapter!

i was wanting to delay this chapter a bit so i could space out the updates to a reasonable standard, but i got a lil excited abt this one and i'm excited to hear your thoughts so comment and lmk! :D

# but i kept runnin' for a soft place to fall

## Chapter Summary

Amidst the distraction, Tragedy turned and started running, carrying Tommy as if he weighed nothing.

Tommy found the only thing he could do was curl his fingers into the fabric of Tragedy's jacket. Sure, the man scared him, but he just saved his life and Glitch had followed him to his home after casually admitting to murder. So he found he would much rather stay with the villain in his vulnerable state, hoping Tragedy had some sense of honor and this was him repaying Tommy for saving his life.

## Chapter Notes

// general violence, blood, fainting, needle (very brief), and ofc dissociation

new power and identity introduced in this one :o

chapter title are lyrics from [Runaway by AURORA](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy blinked awake sluggishly to the muffled sound of Tragedy yelling. A hand was cupped on his outermost ear to try and prevent this, but he felt the vibrations through the villain's chest clearly enough. He could barely see the lower half of Tragedy's mask, bloody handprints still on it in some places, but he could tell the man was fuming.

The sky was dark above them, the moon overhead, barely peeking out from under the light pollution and smoke from a nearby building.

Tommy put a lot of effort into focusing on what was being said.

“-tracked him here to *you* . Hand him over or we won't hesitate to rip you to shreds and leave your mutilated body for the heroes,” a voice snarled, distorted by a voice changer. Tommy distantly realized that out of the three other people in the alleyway, none were heroes. Which also meant their threats weren't empty. Fear rose in his chest.

“*No* , he's staying with me,” Tragedy hissed, his voice rumbling through the air and consequently rattling Tommy's bones powerfully, causing him to shudder at the ferocity of his words. “Get the fuck out of here. I'm not in the mood for your vigilante bullshit.”



“I don’t think you heard me clear enough. I said,” the first voice began, the sound of metal on metal shinking from somewhere ahead of him. “Hand him over.”

The hands holding onto Tommy tightened.

“What do you even want with him?” The other voice challenged, sounding almost pleading while Tragedy took a subtle step backward.

“I could ask the same of *you* .”

There was a tense silence where they all stood unmoving. Then, the sound of someone dropping into the middle of the conflict, their booted feet hitting the ground and cutting through the awkwardness that had settled over them.

“Well, this is borin’,” a new, monotone voice commented, he felt Tragedy relax immensely. Tommy turned his head just enough to catch sight of Comedy lunging at a short vigilante, grabbing him by the shoulders and slamming him into the alleyway wall. After recovering, the vigilante doubled over against his will, giddy laughter bubbling from his lips.

The vigilante’s eyes were blown wide and terrified, turning to exchange a glance with the taller vigilante- *Glitch* .

Tommy tensed as Glitch made eye contact with him, looking between the other vigilante and him with confliction. “Don’t worry Vertigo, I’ll get him,” Glitch assured him as Comedy threw a lazy punch at the shorter vigilante, missing. Comedy stumbled on his feet in a dizzied haze as the vigilante- *Vertigo* ’s laughter died down, allowing him to take in gasps of air.

Amidst the distraction, Tragedy turned and started running, carrying Tommy as if he weighed nothing.

Tommy found that the only thing he could do was curl his fingers into the fabric of Tragedy’s jacket. Sure, the man scared him, but he just saved his life and Glitch had followed him to his home after casually admitting to murder. So he found he would much rather stay with the villain in his vulnerable state, hoping Tragedy had some sense of honor and this was him repaying Tommy for saving his life.

As they ran there was the clear, rippling sound of Glitch teleporting and Tragedy came to a screeching halt, backing away from the vigilante with a threatening hand out.

Before Tragedy could even see it coming, Glitch teleported right in front of him and shoved him backward, dropping Tommy as they both fell.

Tommy twisted and landed mostly on his hands and legs, feeling his scrubs ripping holes into the knees. *Damn it* , he thought, *those things were fucking expensive* .

His own blood mixed with Tragedy’s on his hands as the villain himself stood and began fighting Glitch hand-to-hand.

The scratches on his palms started glowing as his adrenaline kicked in and forcefully healed himself. Tommy forced them to stop, he needed the energy.

Tommy took in his surroundings, hating the dirt begging to infect his wounds that festered on the concrete he was face to face with. Looking up, Tommy caught sight of his hospital, he was so close to it! He didn't know if it was on purpose or not, it was unlikely it was, but he was there!

Deliriously, he remembered he needed to go to work anyway and it was the only safe place nearby, so he pulled himself up against the wall of a nearby building. Thankfully, the two idiots were in the middle of the road now, throwing punches and dodging each other's attacks.

Tommy noticed Tragedy had also been kind enough to bring his messenger bag and he gratefully picked it up.

Stumbling along, he threw nervous glances at the two fighting. By the sound of Glitch breaking out into horrible sobs, he could only guess who was winning.

Tommy took his chances and pushed himself off the wall in a sprint, tripping over the heaviness of his feet a few times.

The lights of the hospital were bright and he winced as he approached, trailing around to the back where he entered and fumbled for his ID badge at the second door.

He scanned it on the reader and it let him inside with a cheery *ding* ! He shoved through the door without another thought.

Tommy blinked and he was standing in front of the break room, bloodied hands pressing against the door.

The white hallways and the sterile clean smell almost made him feel nauseous, swaying on his feet.

It was a push door, he just had to turn the doorknob, but there was a sense of dread he felt about entering.

Before he could make up his mind, the door opened and a gasp came from the person on the other side. "Tommy?! What happened!?" Niki asked, her voice pitched as she grabbed his bloody wrist and led him into the room.

"Somethin'," he muttered dismissively, waving his hand. "'M not too late, am I?"

Niki looked up with an appalled expression on her face, eyes wide as she stared at him, utterly flabbergasted. "Tommy, you are *covered* in blood! Can't we focus on that first?"

Tommy hummed, sitting down at the table she led him to.

"Is that... is that your blood?"

Tommy shook his head, his vision swimming at the action.

"Okay," she breathed, peeling away his jacket and lab coat to reveal his equally bloodied scrubs, the light blue of the fabric turned into a murky purple. "What happened?"

Tommy pursed his lips, his hazy mind searching for a lie, Niki's pleading eyes made him hesitate. So he changed his mind and told the truth. Mostly. "Saved someone."

"So this is someone else's blood?"

Tommy held his hand out and gave her a lazy thumbs up. "Mhm!"

"Are they... alive?"

"Yep! Well, maybe. Yes."

Niki stared at him for a moment before walking away and coming back with a patient gown in her hands. "Okay, do you need help putting this on, or can you?"

Tommy reached for it but Niki pulled the gown out of his reach, giving a disturbed look at his hands.

"You-" she cut herself off, dropping the gown on a nearby table. She ran to the cabinets that lined the wall and pulled out some rags of some sort, wetting them in the sink.

When she came back she started wiping the blood off his hands, finding some of his own beading at the seams of the wounds that covered his palms.

Niki made a disapproving clicking sound with her tongue and put her hands over his now mostly clean one, warmth blooming from them.

...

When he blinked again his hands were completely clean and a nurse was standing above him, a sympathetic frown on her face as she wiped away blood and sweat from his face with a towelette.

"Dr. Nihachu is very worried about you," she commented idly, noticing he was awake. "She's dealing with another emergency at the moment but she'll be in here as soon as she can."

The nurse straightened up and disposed of the pink-red towelette, slipping off the latex gloves as well. She turned to give him another glance, a pinched look on her face. She adjusted her red hair where it was pulled up in a ponytail before walking out of the room.

Looking around, Tommy realized he was in an observation room, his vitals already hooked up.

He sat up, ignoring the aching that pulled at his muscles, squinting against the harsh white light.

...

Tommy doesn't know how long he sat there until there was a knock on the door and Niki was walking in.

Realizing he was awake, she gave him a slightly strained smile. “Hey, Tommy. How are you feeling?”

“Like... shit,” he said after a moment, stretching his legs and regretting it at the painful tingling that ran up his nervous system.

Niki pursed her lips, checking his vitals before turning to him with her hand on her hip. Her pink hair was short, cropped just above her shoulders. Below that was a stethoscope that hung loosely around her neck, next to her ID badge that was one of the retractable ones, pinned to the pocket on her lab coat that laid on her chest. He had never seen her wearing anything different, he supposed it was probably because he only ever saw her at work. “Can you tell me what happened?” She asked quietly, fidgeting with the pen in her hands.

Tommy frowned, looking down at the pulse oximeter on his index finger. It was stuck on with medical tape, tight enough to get a proper read of his heart rate, but not tight enough to cut off his circulation. “I saved someone.”

“Yeah?” Niki prompted, clearly disappointed by his attempt at avoiding the question. “I can tell that much, you really exhausted yourself, Tommy. I need to know what happened.”

Biting his lip, Tommy nodded slowly, there was *no way* he could tell her he healed the supervillain, Tragedy. “I healed the supervillain, Tragedy,” the words spilled from his mouth before he could catch himself.

Niki’s face contorted into shock, jaw dropped and eyes wide as she took in a sharp gasp. “What?!”

It was too late to go back, he realized, feeling a weight lifted off his shoulders anyway. “He was dyin’ and it was so bad, Niki. *So bad.*”

Niki just started shaking her head, taking a step back as her hands flew to her head, rubbing at her temples.

“Tommy, I don’t even- I’m speechless. Only *you* would have something like that happen,” she muttered, shaking her head as she thought.

Tommy’s frown deepened. “Do you think I healed him against my will?”

Niki met his gaze for a moment, unmoving. “I- yeah. Maybe.”

“Well, I didn’t,” he snapped, avoiding the hurt and worry in her eyes. “He- he was going to bleed out and-“

Niki’s expression softened and she placed a cool hand on his arm, squeezing it reassuringly as Tommy bit his lip again, this time to keep them from trembling. “You have a big heart, Tommy. I shouldn’t be surprised you couldn’t *not* heal someone suffering. Even a villain.”

Tommy sniffled a little, keeping tears at bay as everything that had happened crashed down on him at once. Though Tommy felt lighter at Niki’s words.

“But,” she started, making Tommy hold his breath nervously. “That doesn’t mean anyone else would understand. This stays between us okay? I’ll just say you overexerted yourself and that’s why you’re here.”

Tommy nodded tiredly, only to furrow his eyebrows as the words settled in. “What about that- that nurse?”

Niki turned to him again, hands hovering over the vitals monitor. “Oh, Sally? She won’t tell,” she started, sounding unbothered and trusting of the woman. “She has a son around your age, she hates that you’re missing out on being a kid.”

Tommy frowned. “Oh.”

“She also told me to tell you not to hesitate to go to her if you need help,” Niki made a point to give him a look, urging him to let people care about him. It almost worked, but Tommy’s anxious feeling about being a burden won in the end and he tore his eyes away from her, knowing he would keep to himself, even if he was dying.

Tommy has had his fair share of selfish people in his life, using him, taking advantage of him and his power. He never wants to be like that to anyone.

Niki, however, was completely oblivious to this and took his silence as acknowledgment, giving him a little smile. “That being said, you should go home. We have enough doctors here tonight and you should get some more rest.”

“But-”

“No ‘but’s. Go home, Tommy.”

Tommy pursed his lips but sighed. “Okay,” he whispered, holding his arm out for her to take the IV catheter out. Her smile brightened and she eagerly removed it, replacing the needle with a piece of gauze while she waited for the bleeding to stop.

Tommy only rolled his eyes, they both knew he could heal it himself, but Niki was clearly making a point. So he didn’t and she didn’t either. She only continued to press the gauze on the pit of his elbow, humming something he couldn’t recognize.

After a minute or two passed, she took away the gauze, cleaning up the area silently while throwing him looks every second he stayed in place.

Tommy stood up, feeling the weight of her gaze land on him again as he paused. “Where are my clothes?”

Niki huffed out a laugh, Tommy frowned down at the patient gown he was wearing. The ugly pattern on the dull white background stared back at him. “Are you serious? They were *drenched* in blood. No amount of bleach could save them. You’ll have to get new ones, sorry.”

Tommy’s frown deepened. “Where’s my jacket and shit?”

Without even sparing another glance at him she raised her hand up in the direction of a pile of his salvaged things and a coat that was not his own. “I meant *my* jacket, Niki,” he said, picking up his ID and phone. It was blown up with texts and calls from Tubbo and surprisingly, Wilbur.

“That was also ruined,” she deadpanned, the sound of plastic crinkling cutting through her words as she balled up the tape from his IV. “So I sent someone to go grab you a new one.”

“You didn’t need to do that,” he mumbled, picking up the dark blue coat and shrugging it on. It fit surprisingly well, aiding to the fact they probably made sure it was as similar a fit to his old one as possible.

“Well, I did. And you needed an actual coat anyway, not that thin jacket. It’s almost winter, you know? The nights are cold.”

Tommy smiled a little, shaking his head fondly at Niki’s rant. “I know.”

~ + ~

It was cold. Tommy’s fingers were frigid where they sat in his pockets, but his new coat helped a lot.

He was able to move his hands out of his pockets to look at the notifications buzzing from his phone, huffing out a puff of cold air from his mouth. Tommy looked and counted dozens of calls and texts from Tubbo and even a couple texts from Ranboo. He blinked and noticed Wilbur had texted and tried to call him as well, though not to the excessive extent Tubbo had.

While staring at it, his phone started vibrating again, his phone screen brightening with a call. It was Wilbur.

Tommy was confused for a moment, the only messages between them being simple ‘hi’s, confirming he had the right number. He found himself answering, bringing the warm phone up to his ear.

“ *Tommy?* ” The man’s voice was filled with concern.

“It’s me. Hello?”

“ *Are you okay?* ”

Tommy hesitated. “I- yeah. Why?”

This time, Wilbur paused, his voice oddly strained. “ *Oh, I just heard of a villain fight and it was near the hospital you work at. I know you walk to work so- so uh, I was worried.* ”

“Oh,” Tommy said, his eyebrows furrowed as he looked up at the sky. It seemed to be almost dawn, he ignored the weird sensation in his gut. “I’m okay,” he assured, pursing his lips and putting his unoccupied hand back in his pocket where it had fallen to his side. “I didn’t- I didn’t see anything.”

There was a long beat of silence from the other end of the phone until Wilbur sighed. “*Alright, I’m glad you’re okay.*”

The weird feeling dissipated and was replaced with something light and warm, his lips pulling into a slight smile. “Going soft, are you Wilbur?”

The man let out a surprised laugh and hummed. “*Sure, Tommy.*”

“You sound tired,” he commented, peering down an alleyway warily before shuffling past it. A breeze blew from behind him, ruffling his hair and making him shudder at the cold.

“*Maybe a little,*” Wilbur dismissed, quickly changing topics as he shifted on the other end. “*Are you outside right now?*”

“Yeah actually, how’d you know? Stalking me or something?” Tommy teased, though the silence that came after was unsettlingly quiet before Wilbur snorted and jeered back.

“*No, you gremlin, I can hear the wind, and I just- it’s still dark, there could be... it could be unsafe.*”

“I’m fine, Wilbur. Don’t worry about me,” Tommy reassured, looking up and recognizing the same lamppost from before. Still out. “Hey, I’m almost home and you should probably go back to sleep. I’ll see you soon, okay?”

“*Okay, see you soon!*”

Tommy ended the call and hurried up to his home, dreadful.

...

The door opened before he could even touch the handle, Tubbo anxiously looked him over for injuries, only to find a hospital gown.

“What happened?!” Tubbo asked, voice pitched oddly as he dragged Tommy inside.

Tommy regurgitated the lie he had been preparing. “My clothes got bloody in an emergency with a patient,” he started, hoping Tubbo didn’t know enough about his job to see through the lie with logic. “They were too ruined to salvage and I overexerted myself. Niki helped me get some rest though.”

Tubbo paused and stared at him for a moment, eyebrows furrowed. Then he nodded vigorously, resuming his fretting, taking his coat and messenger bag, not noticing the faint, almost unnoticeable bloodstains that had been scrubbed clean. Tubbo hung them up in their usual spot and turned his attention to Tommy again.

“What’s wrong, Tubbo?”

Tubbo paused and gave him a nervous look. “I saw uh- there was a villain attack near where you walk and I...” he trailed off, taking his hand and bringing him upstairs to Tommy’s room. He rifled through Tommy’s drawers, tossing him some clothes he could wear.

“Oh, okay. Well, I’m okay and I am capable of getting my own clothes, thank you,” Tommy said, grabbing Tubbo’s wrists and pulling him back. He gave the boy a good shake by the shoulders, giving him a reassuring smile. “I’m fine, Tubbo.”

Tubbo frowned, guiding him to his bed anyway. “You need to get some rest, take tomorrow night off,” he urged, pulling the blankets up his shoulders and pushing him to lay down.

Tommy just shook his head tiredly, the weight of the trek home with his exhaustion coming back. “Can’t.”

“You *have* to.”

“Why?”

“You- Tommy *please*, take a break,” Tubbo begged, grabbing onto his shoulders and shaking him a little. “If not for yourself but for me, my heart can’t take seeing you like this or- or risking your safety every day.”

Tommy pursed his lips but nodded, sighing as his cold limbs shook of the numbness to the warmth under the covers. “Fine,” he relented tiredly, blinking at Tubbo who smiled brightly. “Only if you do too.”

The boy paused, then sighed, looking down at his hands where they withdrew from Tommy’s shoulders to fidget anxiously. “Okay, I will.”

“Go get some sleep, Tubbo,” Tommy murmured, the bags under the boy’s eyes ever-so prominent in the lighting.

Tubbo’s tense shoulders softened and he grabbed his hand and squeezed it for a second before letting it drop back next to his side. “Alright, goodnight, Tommy.”

“Goodnight, Tubbo.”

Footsteps retreated to the door, the light turned off, and the door closed. Tommy fell asleep before he could even change into his clean clothes.



\*everyone fighting to save tommy from eachother\*  
tommy: get me the fuck away from these people

identities (recap for this chapter):  
tragedy: wilbur  
comedy: techno  
vertigo: tubbo  
glitch: ranboo

THOUGH CURRENTLY VAGUE, TUBBOS POWER IS DEF ONE OF MY FAVS I  
CANT WAIT TO EXPAND ON IT MORE!! and if you were one of the ones on my  
[twitter](#) who voted for it; YOU CHOSE WELL :D

# the needle tears a hole

## Chapter Summary

The subway station was quiet as he entered, like the calm before the storm. It was nearing rush hour and he had to hurry to beat it.

Few people were standing around waiting, just like he was, but none of them made any move to talk to each other. The sounds of the train were distant in the echo chamber of the tunnel. It was cold and smelt like a bathroom, it was far too familiar for Tommy's liking. It reminded him why he hated the train station.

The muscle memory in his body urged him to stand by the edge, to lean until he could feel the wind brush against his face.

## Chapter Notes

// referenced suicidal thoughts/attempt, dissociation, argument

title is a lyric from [Hurt by Nine Inch Nails](#)

reminder that no one in this au is perfect lmao

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy woke up to the smell of omelets cooking, he laid and appreciated the aroma for a moment before pulling himself out of bed. As he stood he looked down and realized he was still in the patient gown. It was wrinkled and sticking to his skin in some places from sweat and all around looked disgusting.

He grabbed the clothes Tubbo had got out for him the night before and walked into the bathroom to take a shower. Tubbo surely wouldn't mind if he took a little longer to come down and eat, he smelled terrible anyway.

Tommy looked at himself in the mirror and paused, turning his head left and right. Something felt off but he couldn't tell what. Maybe it was the dark semi-circles under his eyes. Maybe it was the wrinkle on his forehead he got from furrowing his eyebrows so much. Maybe it was the way his eyes looked empty of a soul.

Tommy tore his attention away from the mirror and prepared a shower.

...

Tommy ran a hand through his wet hair again in an attempt to dry it, he had spent longer than half an hour in the shower. At some point, he had stopped washing and zoned out, so when he snapped back into focus more time had passed than he would've wanted.

There was no longer the sizzling sound of omelets coming from the kitchen and the smell of food wasn't as prominent anymore.

When he walked into the living room Tubbo was sitting on the couch, knitting something with green yarn. He looked up at Tommy with a soft smile. "Hey, Tommy," he greeted, turning to face him better. "Your omelet's on the stove."

Tommy nodded and offered Tubbo a slight smile as well, striding into the kitchen to find a plate where Tubbo had said. He picked it up along with the fork that sat next to his omelet. He walked back into the living room and sat on the couch next to Tubbo, giving him a hesitant look.

"Want to watch a movie?" Tubbo asked, breaking the silence they had fallen into. Looking out the window Tommy could tell it was in the afternoon already, lining up with his messed up sleep schedule, he nodded.

"What movie?"

"Oh, I was just uh... thinking we watch this one movie that came out recently..."

Tommy leveled Tubbo a suspicious look. "Is it a cartoon movie for kids?"

Tubbo sputtered. "No! The plot is very intricate and it has- it has a very deep meaning and-"

"Tubs, you don't have to defend yourself," he chuckled, taking a bite of the omelet.

Tubbo sent him a lighthearted glare and grabbed the remote from the coffee table in front of them, clicking the TV on. When he found the movie he was looking for, Tubbo looked at Tommy and then pressed play.

The movie started with a musical number and Tommy was able to get comfortable, easily getting absorbed into it.

At one point, Tubbo broke the mutual quiet they had been in. "She's kinda like you," he commented, pointing at the screen. The character he was referencing happened to be the mother of the main character who had the power to heal people with food.

Tommy raised an eyebrow at him. "Because she can heal people?"

Tubbo scoffed and rolled his eyes. "Not just that, but she carries the responsibility of the whole town's health on her shoulders. People expect her to heal because that's what her power is. This entire time she's been baking food to heal other people, I haven't seen her *not* healing someone this whole movie!"

Tommy frowned, nodding slightly. It seemed there was another reason Tubbo wanted him to watch the movie. He had clearly thought it out before saying something, seeing as it was in-

depth and specific.

Tubbo sighed when he didn't say anything else and turned back to the movie, pulling a blanket higher up on his shoulders. There wasn't anything he *could* say because he knew Tubbo was right. There just wasn't anything he could do about his situation.

...

When the movie ended, they both stood up and stretched their legs, Tommy bringing his empty plate and fork to the sink. Tubbo followed him into the kitchen, humming as he cleaned up his mess from cooking earlier. Tommy stood, washing his plate off, the food left had dried a little to the dish so he had to work a little harder than normal to get the grime off.

Tommy put the dish and fork into the dishwasher and turned to Tubbo with a hesitance he had grown used to. "Hey, Tubbo... what did you mean earlier?"

"What do you mean?" Tubbo asked, tossing a paper towel he had used to wipe off the stove now that it had cooled.

"I mean, what was your point about... about the mother with healing powers and me?"

Tubbo smiled a little, though he turned away so he wasn't looking Tommy in the eyes. "I meant you don't have to heal everyone you come across... it shouldn't be your responsibility to keep everyone healthy."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed and he nodded a little while putting soap on his hands. "Yeah, but... I know *that* . Just- what brought it up?"

Tubbo paused as if he had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. "Oh, uh I- I don't know. She just reminded me of you," he shrugged, suddenly dismissive.

Tommy stared at him for a moment, then sighed and turned the water back on, washing his hands. Anxious thoughts started to cloud his mind, thinking that somehow Tubbo *knew* . But he couldn't, Tommy lied so he shouldn't.

The reminder only made him feel guilty rather than quell his worries. "I'm going to go to the bakery today," Tommy declared out of the blue, turning off the sink to dry his hands.

Tubbo looked up at him again, searching his face for something. Then, he nodded. "Okay, just be careful."

"I will."

Tommy walked up to the bakery with his hands in his jeans pockets, they were a bit baggy on him but the shade of blue went well with his soft color palette. Opening the door, he was hit with a wave of warm air and the sweet smell of the bakery that had grown familiar to him.

He walked up to the counter and was met face to face with the man with pink hair who Tommy just realized was probably the most intimidating man he'd ever seen. "Hullooo, welcome to- oh you're Wilbur's friend aren't you?" Techno asked, snapping him out of his stupor.

"Yeah, hi," he said sheepishly, staring at the man for a moment before bobbing his head around to peek behind Techno. "Is Wilbur here, actually?"

Techno huffed out a little laugh, leaning on the register slightly. "No, he's only here in the mornings during weekdays."

Tommy frowned. "Why?"

"Because we only need him for the morning rush, and he works another job in the afternoon," he explained with a shrug, tapping idly on the side of the register. "You didn't know that?"

Tommy crossed his arms. "No, I didn't know that. Now how can I call him 'Bakery Bitch' if he doesn't even work here most of the time?"

That got a surprised laugh of Techno, something like pride festering in Tommy's gut. "I don't know, I guess you'll have to find something else to call him then."

"I guess I will," he grumbled, then he realized. "Wait, where else does he work?"

Techno looked up at him again, a slight smile on his face. "He works downtown at a music store, obviously named by a nerd. You'll know it when you see it."

"Sounds like a place he'd work at," he muttered, backing up a little as he thought. Then he was struck with where the music store could be. "Okay, thanks Techno!" He said, waving as his back pressed into the door.

Techno waved backed. "No problem, Tommy."

Tommy walked out and in the direction of the subway station, thinking for a moment. He had never told Techno his name, but Techno never told him his either. Wilbur probably told him. Tommy shrugged to himself and continued walking.

~ + ~

The subway station was quiet as he entered, like the calm before the storm. It was nearing rush hour and he had to hurry to beat it.

A few people were standing around waiting, just like he was, but none of them made any move to talk to each other. The sounds of the train were distant in the echo chamber of the tunnel. It was cold and smelt like a bathroom, and it was far too familiar for Tommy's liking. It reminded him why he hated the train station.

The muscle memory in his body urged him to stand by the edge, to lean until he could feel the wind brush against his face. Maybe until a bystander pulled him back or called the police, though most of the time they didn't. Most of the time they would never notice, never notice his hesitance. Never notice the tears streaming down his face, helpless, hopeless. Selfish. They would never notice until he jumped and the train would be delayed while they scraped him off-

Tommy snapped out it and stood as far away from it as he could, leaning against the grimy wall instead, his hand gripping it like an anchor. Like if he let go he would drift and ride with the waves down the waterfall.

He had someone who depended on him now, he couldn't do that to him. He also couldn't do that to Niki or Sally or his patients or... or Wilbur. Wilbur. That's why he was here, he was going to see Wilbur.

The train pulled up with a loud screech and Tommy breathed a sigh of relief. No one paid him any mind as he boarded, hands bunched in his pockets.

Tommy found his way to a seat, feeling distant again. The train eventually started moving again and he found himself staring at nothing in particular.

Some things never change, he supposed.

~ + ~

Tommy neared a strip mall and paused, reading through all the signs for anything that nerd-like. Then he saw it, on the end of the strip mall was a store with a giant musical note on it, lit up with soft lights. The sign on the front said ' *2 Melodies* ' in white, illuminated lettering. Techno was right, whoever named the place is most definitely a nerd.

He walked right up to the door, noting the lit-up 'open' sign, and pulled the door open. The place definitely matched Wilbur's aesthetic, coffee brown and beige colored walls with plants near the windows, burnt orange and maroon colors splashed in. The next thing he noticed was the walls lined with instruments, organized to different walls by type and price.

The door chimed when he walked in and Tommy's eyes landed on the counter that was on the left side, next to the entrance, it was empty. "One sec!" A muffled yell came in the direction of a door near the back and suddenly it opened, revealing a familiar man facing away from Tommy, a guitar case on his back. Wilbur carefully backed out of the room, carrying three boxes stacked up onto each other.

When Wilbur turned around he paused, his circular-framed glasses falling down onto the tip of his nose. “Tommy?!”

He dropped the boxes without a second thought and rushed over to Tommy, throwing his arms around his shoulders and squeezing.

Tommy froze up for a moment at the contact, no one ever hugged him unless he just saved their life, not even Tubbo. He didn’t like hugs and Tommy never really felt strongly about them either way. He was surprised to find it comforted him, he relaxed a little.

“Hi, Wilbur,” he breathed, slightly strained from the tight hug as he snaked his arms around the man in return. After a moment he let go and Tommy was able to breathe again, grumbling about dying of asphyxiation.

Wilbur completely ignored his complaints and shook him excitedly by the shoulders. “I didn’t expect you to be here! Are you off work or something?”

“Yeah, I am,” he said, brightening at Wilbur’s purely happy expression. “I went to the bakery and your brother told me I’d find you here.”

Wilbur chuckled, light and airy. “You talked to Techno?”

“I did, and he’s much cooler than you.”

Wilbur gasped, feigning offense as he held a hand up to his heart. “No, he’s not. I’m *very* cool. *Way* cooler than Techno.”

“I dunno, Wilbur... he made a pretty compelling case.”

“What? *Case* ? What is this? A court hearing?”

“Yeah, he said the place you worked at looked like it was named by a nerd,” Tommy said, watching as Wilbur walked over and picked up the boxes.

“Wha- of course he did,” he huffed, stacking them back on top of each other one by one. “The name is *cool* and *clever* , Tommy. Just like me, cool and clever. He simply doesn’t understand that.”

“What’s so clever about it?” Tommy prompted, leaning against the counter while Wilbur opted to drag the boxes to the other side.

“Well, two melodies make a harmony. So it just kind of makes sense,” he shrugged, slinging the guitar case off his back.

“Oh,” Tommy hummed, eyes furrowing at the sight of the guitar. “Is that yours?” He asked, tipping his head in its direction.

Wilbur looked up at him and then at the case, suddenly shy. “Yeah, this one’s mine.”

“You play guitar?” Tommy gasped in awe, gazing at him with his chin perched on his hands.

“I guess I do, I’m not very *good* but-”

“Can you play me a song?” He asked, cutting off Wilbur’s insecure rambling.

Wilbur stared at him for a moment, considering. Then, he nodded with a slight smile, unbuckling the case and carefully taking the guitar out.

He led them over to a cozy seating area with couches and Wilbur sat down, patting the spot next to him. Tommy sat down, pulling his legs up and crossing them, an intrigued grin on his face.

Wilbur gave him a fond look and started strumming to something Tommy hadn’t heard before, at some points soft and low and others high and excited. Tommy thought it matched Wilbur well.

Tommy swayed to the music, not wanting to interrupt any part of it. It was something without lyrics, though it spoke to him in ways words couldn’t.

Wilbur’s easy expression still stayed focused on the guitar, glancing up at him occasionally with a smile.

When the song tapered off to an end, all of Tommy’s excitement rose to the surface as he shook Wilbur by the shoulders. “That was amazing!”

Wilbur laughed lightly as Tommy continued to express how impressed he was, scoffing about Wilbur’s previous shyness.

“What song was that?” Tommy asked, having let go of Wilbur’s shoulders after some consideration of self-control.

Wilbur shifted where he was sitting, dimples on display as he ducked his head a little to answer. “Oh, it’s one I wrote.”

“Really?” The word sounded far more surprised than Tommy was intending, which only sent Wilbur into a fit of laughter.

“Wowww, don’t seem so shocked,” he said, his laughter delving into hearty chuckles. “But, yeah it is.”

“That’s so cool, Wil! Do you have another one you wrote that you could play?”

For a second Wilbur froze a little, then he relaxed with a cheeky smile. Tommy raised an eyebrow. “You called me Wil,” he stated, smug look growing.

“Wha- no I didn’t! Uh-” Tommy sputtered, not knowing whether he crossed a line or not.

“It’s okay, you can call me ‘Wil’, Tommy,” Wilbur assured, almost a teasing lilt to his voice.

Tommy scowled at him lightheartedly, crossing his arms as he hummed in acknowledgment.



“Gremlin,” Wilbur huffed, the word lined with fondness as he leaned back against the couch a little more.

Tommy’s brows furrowed. “What?”

“I told you I would think of a nickname that *you* wouldn’t like. I thought of one; gremlin.”

Tommy wanted to retort with some quip, sputter about how much he hated it. But, it would simply be a lie. The nickname, though insulting, was said with such affection it made Tommy falter. “Pfft, I’m not a fuckin’ gremlin,” he mumbled, defensive.

Wilbur chuckled softly. “Sure you aren’t,” he said, smiling as his eyes skimmed over to the door where the same bell as earlier rang. “I’ll be right back, gremlin.”

Tommy watched as Wilbur stood up with an automatic greeting to the incoming customer, skidding behind the counter as he asked them what they needed.

It gave Tommy a moment to collect himself, sure Tubbo called him ‘boss man’ as opposed to his ‘big man’ but it was nothing like the warm feeling he had still swimming in his heart. It filled a hole that he knew was there but refused to acknowledge.

...

Tommy was able to stay until Wilbur closed shop, talking to the man and begging him to play him another song the entire time. Tommy was calmer than he had been in a long time, able to have casual conversation and banter with the man like he had known him his whole life. *Part of Tommy wished he had, maybe then he wouldn’t feel so empty all the time.*

Wilbur offered him a ride home and Tommy reluctantly agreed after the man assured him it wasn’t a waste of his time. Tommy also dreaded the idea of going home on the train again.

Tommy was surprised to see Wilbur had a fairly expensive car, something that he wouldn’t have expected from a man who works two minimum-wage jobs. But he didn’t pay it much mind and told him his address.

After they got on the road, Wilbur played some music he liked in the car, rambling about the deeper meanings behind them on occasion. Tommy always listened intently, enthusiastically taking everything in and adding his own observations.

When they finally arrived at Tommy’s house, Wilbur poorly hid his amazement at how nice his house was while parking in the driveway. “Tubbo found it,” he explained, hesitantly unbuckling his seatbelt which Wilbur had drilled him to put on. “I was too busy to go looking for houses, but I like it.”

Wilbur gave him a sad smile, nodding. “He gardens?”

Tommy noticed where his gaze had landed on the front lawn, completely perfect and well kept along with flowers of different kinds growing under the windows. A few vines reaching up and holding onto the house in a bearable amount, not too overgrown. “Yeah, he does. He’s good at lots of things like that.”

“Sounds like a cool kid,” Wilbur commented absentmindedly, hands tapping the steering wheel awkwardly.

“He is, maybe you can meet him next time. He’s a bit... stressed recently.”

Wilbur nodded in understanding.

“Anyway, I’ll see you soon! Probably at the bakery though,” he said, opening the car door, before he could step out Wilbur reached forward and ruffled his hair, laughing at Tommy’s scowl.

“Bye, Tommy!” Wilbur waved, Tommy rolled his eyes in faux annoyance and waved back.

...

The door closed behind him and Tubbo was standing at the front window with his face pressed against the blinds, peeking through one. He turned to Tommy with a skeptical gaze, a hand behind his back. “Who was that?”

Tommy sighed, taking his coat off per usual. “That was my friend,” he said vaguely.

“Name? *Age* ? Where did you meet this man and why did you get in his car?” Tubbo interrogated, arms crossed.

“His name’s Wilbur. I dunno, early twenties? He works at the bakery I’ve been going to on the weekends.”

“You didn’t answer the most important question, Tommy,” Tubbo huffed, tapping his foot impatiently and a stern look on his face.

“Because I trust him, why else would I get in his car? Because I *want* to be kidnapped? Use that big brain of yours, Tubbo!” Tommy snapped, throwing his arms up and letting them fall down to slap against his sides. The built-up annoyance from Tubbo’s constant fussing spilled out all at once. “I’m not *stupid* !”

Tubbo looked shocked, jaw dropped for a moment before his eyebrows furrowed with something else. “I never said you were stupid! You just act carelessly all the time! How am I supposed to know you didn’t throw yourself into some random man’s car because you’re self-destructive?!”

The room went terribly silent, Tommy clenched his fists and then released them, his lips pressed into a thin line. Instead of saying one of the responses bubbling in his mind, he just thought them. There was something about admitting he had mental issues that was embarrassing and hurt his ego just thinking about.

So he said nothing and focused on the floor as he brushed past Tubbo. The boy was already guiltily shouting his name after him as he droned up to his room, kicking his shoes off and throwing himself on his bed.

The reminder of the train station was bad enough, but Tubbo still seemed to think he would still do... whatever it was he thought Tommy would do that was so careless.

He got up and locked his door in case Tubbo would try to come in and apologize, even though he shouldn't.

Tommy selfishly wanted Tubbo to feel bad, but he also knew he had every right to feel the way he did. To say what he said.

...

It kept him awake for longer than usual. With a mix of emotions tied in a knot of his organs, he was eventually able to fall asleep, wallowing in self-pity and remorse.

## Chapter End Notes

to the person commented that they wanted tommy to watch encanto; thank you i stole that directly from you

i couldn't think of a name for the music store and then i remembered my name is literally melody so i stole my name and totally didn't project my own style on the music store. lmfaooooo

i realized how much i am projecting this chapter bc my love language is shaking my fam/friends violently by the shoulders lol

anyway leave a comment, i love reading them! :D

# the old familiar sting

## Chapter Summary

It wasn't often they had to perform surgery on patients, seeing as they could easily be healed up with someone's powers. But when something was lodged inside someone, it was unsafe to heal them without removing the foreign object first.

It seemed this man was littered with scrap metal, though he heard the anesthesiologist talking to him as he injected the necessary drugs into an IV.

To say the least, Tommy was surprised the man was still conscious, he had seen the blood on the stretcher and it wasn't pretty.

So when he was fully ready, he walked into the operating room after another nurse. And when his eyes landed on the patient, he stilled, eyes going impossibly wide.

On the gurney, with blood erupting from gashes in his stomach, was none other than Wilbur's twin brother, Technoblade Craft.

## Chapter Notes

// blood, surgery/gore, gun, violence, bombs, gaslighting (good intent)

chapter title from [Hurt by Nine Inch Nails](#) again lol

(identities in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He had successfully been able to avoid Tubbo for a few days. It was fairly easy considering the boy seemed to be avoiding him as well, leaving food for him in the fridge and going off to Ranboo's.

It was Friday and he was lucky enough to not run into the boy while leaving for work. He had gone out and bought a new lab coat and scrubs after his day off, wincing at the price. Just because he was well off didn't mean he didn't try to conserve his spending.

The night before he had gotten ready in a haze again, snapping the price tag off his scrubs after forgetting to wash the formaldehyde off them. The smell of the chemical made his nose scrunch up, but he got used to it by the time he had made it to the hospital.

After the incident with Tragedy, he found himself a little more aware on his late-night walks to work, holding his messenger bag close and peering down alleyways. The night before he had no problems, but he still felt on edge as he left the house again.

It was in times like these he wished he was with Wilbur, even if he hadn't known him for very long, he still felt like he knew him better than even Tubbo did. He filled the silence that Tommy hated, talking about nothing but making it captivating all the same. He eased the anxiety that plagued Tommy all the time, something he tried and failed to block out constantly on his own.

He made it to the turn, the one with the streetlamp he remembered from that night. Unsurprisingly, it was still out. No one had come to fix it.

The quiet eventually started to bother Tommy a lot more than usual and he hummed one of Wilbur's songs to fill the space, eyes scanning the empty streets.

Passing another alleyway, a loud clatter pierced the silence. Tommy froze up, head whipping around to search the dark for the source of the noise.

His eyes locked with small ones that were close to the ground, staring at him apprehensively. Tommy took a step back, hands tightening around the strap of his bag.

"Hello?" He whispered, clearing his throat after realizing he hadn't spoken all day.

The eyes moved and Tommy watched as a brown tabby cat emerged from the shadows, shoulders hunched as it crept closer. He quickly noticed the cat was pregnant, no stray could be that big without a bunch of babies ready to pop out. Tommy immediately felt a smile pull at his lips and he crouched slowly, holding his hand out towards her.

The cat warily eyed his hand before sniffing it and blinking up at him. Tommy very gently moved his hand and pet the cat's head, grinning as she eased up a little, tilting her head into his hand.

"There you are," he muttered, the cat allowing him to pick at something stuck in her fur. "You had someone looking after you before, didn't you?" He asked quietly, frowning a little. She clearly hadn't been eating much recently, seeing as her face was sunken in and the hard-to-reach spots of her brown coat were unkempt. "You're too friendly to just be a stray..."

The cat, obviously, didn't answer in the slightest, appreciating the love she was receiving. The thought of someone kicking out a pregnant cat only made him sadder.

Tommy lifted his head and looked around, finding none of the shops nearby to be open. "I'll bring you something on my way home in the morning, okay?" He promised, standing up and pursing his lips as the cat meowed in disappointment, taking to brush against his legs. "I have to go now..."

He gently nudged his foot at her, urging her to go back into the alleyway. Thankfully, this time, she obliged, scampering off with one last glance at him.

Tommy noted the alleyway she ran into and made a mental reminder to buy some cat food and treats. A plan began to form in his head, making him more determined as he walked. Maybe he could get her to a vet to search for a chip of some kind, maybe she was just lost.

With that, he made his way into work with something to think about.

...

There was yelling and the sirens from an ambulance outside got louder. Tommy did his usual movements as he recounted what he was told from the call, preparing adequately for the incoming person. There was a violent fight of some kind, involving someone with the power to control metal. All they know is the patient was attacked with metal shrapnel, all embedded into his chest and stomach area.

Tommy was in his surgical protection; hair net, mask, gloves. All of it. His nurses were getting the tools ready, rushing around him.

A group of people came in, transferring the presumed injured man onto a gurney to move to the operating room. Niki was way better at surgery than him, but she wasn't there tonight and he was the best one after her. So against his initial reaction, he agreed to do it.

It wasn't often they had to perform surgery on patients, seeing as they could easily be healed up with someone's powers. But when something was lodged inside someone, it was unsafe to heal them without removing the foreign object first.

It seemed this man was littered with scrap metal, though he heard the anesthesiologist talking to him as he injected the necessary drugs into an IV.

To say the least, Tommy was surprised the man was still conscious, he had seen the blood on the stretcher and it wasn't pretty.

So when he was fully ready, he walked into the operating room after another nurse. And when his eyes landed on the patient, he stilled, eyes going impossibly wide.

On the gurney, with blood erupting from gashes in his stomach, was none other than Wilbur's twin brother, Technoblade Craft.

His heart dropped to his stomach and all eyes landed on him, but the voices around him were drowned out.

Tommy had never performed on someone he knew before, excluding the time Tubbo choked on a brussel sprout and he had to do the Heimlich maneuver to stop him from suffocating. Or the times Tubbo would get a cut and reluctantly let Tommy heal them.

This was way different, not only did he know the man but his life was now in his hands. Techno was actively bleeding out and there he was, frozen in shock.

He snapped himself out of it, trying not to think of Wilbur while he examined the wounds and the xrays already being presented to him. They had already gotten rid of what was left of his

fancy-looking shirt, exposing his blood-covered torso. *What if Techno dies? Wilbur would never forgive you.*

“How many?” He demanded, his movements jerky as he looked up at a nearby nurse. The nurse was momentarily confused by his uncharacteristically snappy tone but quickly shook it off.

“Seven. Three large ones; bigger than an inch. Four smaller ones,” they informed him, pointing lightly at the wounds as they spoke. “They’re sharp so it could cause more harm on the way out.”

Nodding, Tommy picked up a pair of forceps and looked at where the biggest shard was; far too close to the lungs for Tommy’s comfort. He avoided glancing up at Techno’s face as he leaned down, digging into the wound a little to get a grip on the shard.

He winced as the loud beeping of a heart monitor practically matched his own, racing heart. Tommy finally found the edge of the metal piece and ever-so-slowly extracted it, placing it down on a tray that was conveniently right next to him. *You’ll be the reason Wilbur’s brother died.*

He placed his gloved hand on the now more open wound and focused, taking extra effort to heal through the glove. But, it was nothing new, being something he learned in his medical training.

The gash closed up, starting at the internal damage all the way to the surface and Tommy quickly moved onto the next shard of metal. *Techno is going to bleed out at your hand.*

Tommy vaguely heard nurses talking quietly in the background, he caught one of them saying Techno’s name and then Wilbur’s, then another name he didn’t recognize off the bat, though he could tell it was someone related by the last name.

He ignored the sick feeling in his stomach as he registered it was *Technoblade’s* blood on the metal forceps. Someone he saw often and exchanged polite greetings with. *You’re going to mess up and he’s going to bleed out.*

He focused on the second shard he was grabbing and shimmied it out, hurriedly covering the blood bubbling up with his hand, healing it.

The piece was placed next to the other one and he was quick to turn back and pry at another one, pausing when Techno’s heart rate suddenly spiked. It calmed when more anesthetic was added to the IV in his arm.

Tommy continued, grabbing the third piece out, then the fourth and fifth, healing along the way. With every piece that was removed, his shoulders felt a little lighter. But that was quickly amped back up when he heard the distinctive sound of Wilbur’s voice somewhere outside the door.

Everyone in the room could feel the tension rise as Tommy stilled, his hands forcibly unshaken.

Wilbur's voice sounded closer and his tone was sharp as he argued with someone. A voice Tommy couldn't discern from the several dozen nurses that worked in the building, but he could tell they were not happy.

It was likely the nurse that had been missing during the preparation process coming in late, hopefully, they had a good reason for when Tommy would have to confront them about it later.

He tried not to pay them any more attention until the door opened and Tommy's eyes met Wilbur's.

"-in surgery, so you can't see your brother right now," the nurse was saying, but neither of them were listening.

They were both frozen in shock, the angered expression slipping off of Wilbur's face as they stared at each other.

Tommy stood completely still, his gloved hands covered in the blood of the man's brother, who was unconscious on the table in front of him.

Wilbur made a move like he was going to walk in, but Tommy knew he wasn't stupid enough to interrupt the surgery, the other nurses did not. The assisting nurse pulled the doors closed quicker, muttering something about calling security.

A rush of nerves hit him like a freight train and he zeroed back in on Techno, Wilbur's shocked look burned into his brain.

He removed the sixth shard with relative ease and healed it, pursing his lips when he got to the last one.

It was dangerously close to Te- the patient's heart, the nurse standing next to him seemed to realize this as well, nervously watching. Upon request, they handed him a smaller forceps and they moved the overhead light to be closer.

He positioned his hand better and slowly grabbed at the side of the metal shard, wincing as it slipped a little. Tommy slowly started to pull the piece of shrapnel out, the process precise and careful. Everyone around him held their breath.

The metal glinted against the white light above and landed in his eye, but he only squinted, not letting it affect him. Tommy bit his lip, close to almost getting the entire one-inch by one-inch wide metal shard out when a loud noise made everyone jump in fear. A bomb.

Tommy dropped the shard when a nurse nearby fell to the ground, covering their ears. If it were any other situation, he wouldn't have blamed them. But Tommy saw as the shard left his grip and fell right back down into the wound, blood immediately bursting from it. It being so close to the heart, it must've cut a vital artery.

His eyes widened and while the others screamed as another bomb sounded relatively close to the hospital, alarms sounding through the hospital. Tommy was screaming because someone



he knew was about to die and it was his fault.

The nurses nearby were panicked as they hurried to the door, something someone with self-preservation would do. One nurse turned to look back at him with a guilty look on their face. “Doc, leave him! You need to get out, the next bomb going off could be in this building!” They yelled at him, not wasting any time to see his reaction, only turning and running.

Tommy ignored them and instead took to reaching his hand into the wound, stabilizing himself against the table as the ground shook.

As soon as his hand grabbed onto the shard and pulled it out, he used his other hand to heal Techno- the patient’s arteries. He flinched when the heart monitor screamed in his ears and the patient began to seize with a heart attack.

Tommy, frustrated, ripped off his gloves and flushed as much power into his hands as he could as he held them over the artery. After a moment it healed and his head pounded as he focused on the skin stitching back together.

The seizing stopped and the heart monitor started to even out again and Tommy breathed a sigh of relief, eyes heavy. His hands shook as he made his way over to the scrub sink, swallowing back bile as he washed Techno’s blood down the drain.

Another loud explosion close nearby shook the building again and he braced himself against the sink, the fear coming back tenfold now that he wasn’t worried about Techno bleeding out. Techno. He wasn’t awake so he couldn’t move from the operating table to safety.

Tommy barely registered grabbing onto a towel and drying his now clean hands, tripping over to Techno again. A spike of pain shot through his nervous system and he hissed in a sharp breath, reaching over to grab the IV out of Techno’s arm. He didn’t have time for protocol, only getting Techno out of the building as quickly as he could. He just saved the man’s life, he wasn’t going to leave him to die like that. He had too much to lose.

Blood dripped down Techno’s arm as soon as he ripped the tape off and pulled the IV out. He quickly pressed his hand to it and healed it, ignoring how the back of his neck grew warmer to the point of nausea.

He detached all of the other monitors stuck to him, grumbling under his breath as the heart rate monitor flatlined without a heartbeat to register.

Reaching for the locks that held the wheels of the gurney in place, he heard the door slam open behind him.

Tommy turned around, eyes wide as he focused on the person standing in the doorway with a handgun trained on him. It was someone dressed in full black with a mask over their face, the only thing exposed being their eyes. Tommy noticed the bulletproof vest they were wearing and his eyebrows furrowed.

When they didn’t lower the gun, he shakily put his hands up, one of them coming up to remove his surgical mask so they could see him when he spoke. His words didn’t come out as

intended. “Wha’ the fuck?”

The person faltered for a second, eyes darting between him and Techno. “They told me no one would be here,” the man grumbled, taking a step closer to him, Tommy stepped back, standing in front of the gurney. For some reason, he knew it wasn’t Tommy the man was after.

“Stay- stay away,” Tommy warned, though his voice betrayed him, stuttering a little. The weight of the handgun directed at him made his stomach turn unpleasantly.

“Move kid, I don’t want to hurt you. I’m only here for him,” the man said uneasily, taking a quick glance behind him into the open hallway, alarms still going off.

Tommy pursed his lips, frantically looking around for anything to help him. His eyes briefly landed on the scalpel sitting innocently on a tray nearby. Never in his life had he ever thought of harming someone, but right now, his mind was in overdrive, morals forgotten in the fear. “No.”

Tommy puffed up his chest a little, heavily leaning against the gurney behind him. The man exhaled something annoyed and started toward him, Tommy quickly lunged for the tray, snatching up the scalpel and turning it on the man.

The man paused and raised his gun again, but Tommy didn’t falter. He pretended not to hear the subtle rustling from the gurney behind him. *Could that man not hold anesthetic?* “There are over a dozen places I could stab you right now, and you would bleed out within minutes- *seconds* even,” Tommy threatened, his voice surprisingly firm, it made the man hesitate. “Stay back.”

“I don’t want to shoot you, kid.”

“I don’t necessarily want to stab you either, creepy-ass man, but I will. Stay. Back.”

Tommy squinted as he saw a black *bird* fly through the hallway behind the man. The gunman did not turn around and instead took his moment of confusion to rush forward, reaching for the scalpel.

Tommy shoved the man and fell back a little against the gurney, about to lash out with the scalpel when he looked up to see the room *filling* with black birds he recognized as crows.

Tommy and the man were stunned, watching as they flooded through the doorway, black feathers everywhere. Tommy wondered if he had been slipped drugs at some point, but clearly, the other man was seeing it too.

The birds started to crowd into one concentrated area until they exploded into nothing, revealing a dark figure of a man. His head was tilted down, a big black hat shadowing his face, waves of *death* emitting from him. Tommy knew it too well.

The masked man raised his gun again, this time at the dark figure, and fired three times. Only, the figure dissipated into a murder of crows again before taking human form once more. The

figure seemed angry now as he struck forward, knocking the gun out of the man's hand.

Tommy blinked and the masked man had a giant black sword impaled through his body, when it retracted out, he fell to the floor in a mess of black residue from the sword and blood.

Tommy looked up with wide eyes, scalpel held pathetically in shaky hands as he backed up, his legs hitting the gurney behind him.

His fear was obvious as he stared into the glowing eyes under the dark shadow of the man's face, the color an icy blue.

This was where he died, he thought regretfully, holding eye contact. He wanted to say something, maybe ask for mercy, but his lips didn't form the words.

Then, something unexpected happened, the terrifying man's sword disappeared and he held his hands out placatingly. "Don't worry, mate," he started, voice echoing through the room with thunder. "I won't hurt you."

Tommy's eyes darted to his side where he could barely see Techno blinking, slowly coming out of his unconscious stupor.

"Or him," he added after noticing his hesitation. Tommy paused, was this a hero? Was he that uninformed that he had no idea who this hero was? But heroes weren't supposed to kill.

Tommy wanted to object, but another tremor shook the ground, this time on the other side of the building. But it didn't sound close enough to be in the hospital itself.

"Tommy?" Techno's confused voice came behind him and he turned to meet his eyes, the pink-haired man was blearily blinking up at him in shock.

At that moment he was distracted, the man rushed forward and disarmed him, before Tommy even knew it, he was being swept up in a storm of crows.

Tommy squeezed his eyes shut, stomach churning as the nausea grew and he was engulfed in black feathers, *moving*; taking twists and turns.

Suddenly, he felt the brush of cold air against his face and he fell onto concrete ground, he held back the urge to vomit and looked up, finding him outside the hospital. He glanced around nervously and realized Techno must still be inside.

Tommy stood on trembling legs, the full extent of his exhaustion pushing through as he took a step back toward the hospital. Another explosion went off, farther away but it still shook the ground.

Tommy fell back into someone. "There you are," the sound of the hero's voice he had recognized from TV made Tommy start to struggle against him. He was not about to let a hero control him again. "Hey! Cut it out!"

Tommy wiggled free but he fell to the ground in a heap, staring up at the masked face before him. The hero had dark brown hair in a messy array, like he had constant bedhead. The mask

that covered his eyes looked like one worn to sleep, but somehow he could still see out of it because he leveled Tommy an unimpressed look.

Tommy childishly stuck his tongue out at the hero, his vision swimming as the hero pulled him upward into a sitting position.

Another hero's voice came from behind them. "Melatonin, just knock him out and bring him to the safe zone already," the other hero huffed, sounding vaguely familiar as well.

He blinked and the other hero was now standing over him, talking with Melatonin as if he wasn't confused and in pain, his head still against the concrete ground.

"-can't find the bomber. So there could be more."

"Well, find them then, Matchbox! You know I'm on civilian duty," Melatonin complained, throwing his hands up and letting them fall to his sides. Tommy groaned, mostly in annoyance from the whole situation, they both looked down at him.

"You're doing a shit job at it," Matchbox retorted with a scoff before walking away. He barely caught him mutter something under his breath. "Can't believe Mirage can't just focus on-"

Melatonin ignored the comment and crouched down, pressing his hands against Tommy's forehead. Suddenly, his head filled with cotton as he felt his pulse ring out through his forehead, making him hiss in pain. It was over quickly as the world went black.

~ + ~

Tommy woke up with a pinch in his arm and an ache in his neck. He looked around and realized he was in a hospital room, an IV hooked up to his arm.

He groaned and flinched when he found a police officer staring into his soul, sitting next to his bedside. "What the fuck?"

"Hello, Dr. Metro," the officer greeted, adjusting how he was seated. Scowling, Tommy hummed in acknowledgment, he hated his last name. It was a giant reminder that he was an orphan, named after the place he was found abandoned. Tommy noticed the clipboard in his hand. "I'm here to ask you some questions about your encounter here involving a man with a gun, alright?"

"What do you need to know to leave me alone?" Tommy sighed, noting he wasn't changed into a patient gown, leaving him in his scrubs excluding the surgery gear, which he was thankful for.

"Well, how about we start with what he looked like?"

Tommy pursed his lips, his head hurting still. “Uh, I dunno, he was wearing a mask. Couldn’t see anything but his eyes.”

The police officer nodded, tapping a pen on the clipboard after not writing anything down. “How about his eyes then? Could you tell me what they looked like? The color?”

“Uh, a dark color I think,” he shrugged, watching the man scribble a few sentences on the paper.

“That’s it? Really?”

“Yeah, that’s all I can remember,” he huffed, crossing his arms, careful of the IV. “I was a bit busy fearing for my life if you couldn’t tell.”

“Apologies,” the officer said, nodding, though he didn’t seem to mean it at all as he wrote something else down. “And... would you care to explain what happened? Why were you still in the operating room when everyone else evacuated?”

Tommy scowled at the man. “Because... the patient was dying...”

“Okay, do you know why the man was there?”

“No, I don’t know,” he admitted, biting his lip and furrowing his eyebrows.

“You’re a smart kid,” the officer started, earning him a glare from Tommy. “Do you think it’s possible that the gunman was there for your patient, Technoblade Craft?”

Tommy stayed quiet for a moment, thinking. “Yes.”

“Why do you think he wanted to kill Technoblade? Any possible gang relations you are aware of?”

That pissed him off. Techno was the shiest person he knew, though he *looked* intimidating, all the things he heard from Wilbur and what he’d seen, the man couldn’t hurt a fly. “I’m done answering your questions,” Tommy huffed, turning in the hospital bed to face away from him.

“Dr. Metro this-“

A knock on the door interrupted the officer, and the man sighed. They both said nothing and a nurse walked in with someone else waiting outside the door.

“How are you doing, Doc?” The nurse asked kindly, shooting a glare at the officer. Tommy recognized her as the nurse who helped him and kept his secret.

“I’m just fine, Nurse Salmon,” he smiled, thankful for her to rescue him from the interrogation.

“Please, call me Sally,” she told him, flashing him a grin. “Is this officer giving you trouble?” She nodded in the man’s direction like he wasn’t even there.

Tommy smirked. "He is."

"Officer Harold, I remember specifically telling you to stay out of his room," she said sternly, pausing where she was checking his vitals. "He is in no state to answer your questions anyway."

The officer frowned sheepishly and stood up, collecting his things and walking to the door. Sally stared him down the whole time. He turned and gave Tommy one last glance before leaving the room. "Thanks," he breathed, feeling a little easier.

"It's no problem, dear," she hummed, the beeping of the monitors interrupting the quiet. Sally turned to him and frowned. "Now, I know you might want some more alone time. But there's someone here who wants to see you."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed and then he remembered Wilbur making eye contact with him from outside the operating room.

"Do you want to see them?"

Tommy held his breath for a moment before nodding, he could do this. Sally strode over and opened the door, whispering before leaning back and letting the person by.

Wilbur walked in and they met eyes again, he quickly looked away. He could not do this.

"Hey, Tommy," Wilbur said, standing next to his bedside, hovering awkwardly.

"Hi," he mumbled, fidgeting with his hands.

"Are you okay?"

Tommy pursed his lips and nodded, ignoring the pang in his head at the action. "Did Techno...?" He trailed off, taking to stare at the gray cushion on the chair.

"Yeah, he's fine," Wilbur assured, smiling. Tommy let out a sigh of relief. "Thank you. You saved his life, you know."

He ignored the kind words and just nodded again. "I'm glad he's okay."

It was silent for another moment before Wilbur spoke up again. "My father's here, I'm sure he'll want to meet you. He's with Techno right now."

"Okay," Tommy hesitated, looking out the window. "What happened?"

Wilbur frowned and scratched the back of his neck. "There were a few bombs that went off around the hospital. They don't know who did it, but they think the placement was strategic."

"Did anyone get hurt?" Tommy asked, his voice soft and low.

Wilbur gave him a slight sympathetic smile, tilting his head at him. Then his smile turned something a little smug. "Only the person who held you at gunpoint."

Tommy's eyes widened as he remembered that fact, the looming- the dark- the... who? Someone was there... someone killed the gunman. He couldn't remember who. That person somehow.. got him out of the hospital. "I- why can't I remember..." Tommy blinked, the memory was slipping through his fingers, even as he focused on it.

Wilbur's smile fell a little and he sat down in the chair the officer had been harassing him in. "It's probably just a trauma response," he dismissed, putting a hand on the guard rail of the hospital bed. "You were held at gunpoint, it's reasonable your brain is trying to protect you."

"Since when are you a psychologist?" Tommy teased and Wilbur just huffed out a laugh. Tapping the man's hand boredly, then he remembered something important. "How did you get out?" He questioned, raising an eyebrow at the man.

Wilbur's expression morphed into something a little embarrassed. "I was uh... escorted out by security before the bombs went off."

Tommy burst out into laughter, though the context for it was sad, the thought of Wilbur being dragged out by security amused him.

Wilbur only rolled his eyes fondly, letting out a little chuckle as he pondered it more. Then Tommy remembered something else.

"Wait, why are we in the hospital now, it was evacuated?"

Wilbur shook his head thoughtfully. "They searched the building and found no bombs, I guess the hospital is too important to abandon," he shrugged, a sad look making its way onto his face. "You didn't run... when there could've been a bomb in the building. The whole thing could've collapsed on you."

Tommy frowned, tracing the visible veins in Wilbur's hand absentmindedly while he actively avoided making eye contact with him. "I wouldn't have been able to live with myself if your brother died and it was my fault..."

He could feel the solemn look in Wilbur's eyes even without looking at him. "As happy as I am that you saved his life, it wouldn't have been your fault, Tommy."

Tommy looked up and pursed his lips. He held back the urge to argue with him, thinking that maybe if he was self-aware enough it would ease the guilt. It never did.

"Tommy, you are the most selfless person I know. Although I would've been very... upset, I wouldn't have-"

"Someone was there to assassinate him," Tommy interrupted, turning his head up to finally look at him. "The gunman," he began. "He was there to kill Techno, not me. He said 'they told me no one would be here,' he was targeted, Wilbur. Why was someone coming to kill Techno?"

At that, Wilbur went quiet, eyebrows furrowed. The idea didn't surprise Wilbur in the slightest, but it made him think.

Tommy continued when he didn't speak up. "Don't you think it's a little weird that bombs went off while he was in surgery, just for someone to come and try to kill him while they thought no one would be there?"

Tommy went to say more, only to be interrupted by Wilbur holding his other hand up. "Tommy," he started warily, voice barely above a whisper. "If someone did try to assassinate him, you would be a target as a witness. So please, keep your voice down."

The words scared Tommy more than anything, and his mouth snapped shut. He didn't need to be told twice.

"Thank you," Wilbur said quietly, giving Tommy's hand a reassuring pat. Surprisingly, Tommy no longer felt shaken to his core with fear, but Wilbur's frown had grown a little more and he looked away. A moment passed and Tommy felt much calmer than before, almost unnaturally so. "I think you should get some more rest, you expended a lot of your energy today."

Tommy found himself nodding, eyes feeling heavier without the anxiety keeping him awake.

After a few minutes, he fell asleep to the sound of soft humming.

## Chapter End Notes

i couldn't bring myself to make tommy's last name "innit" again so i made him a foundling whose last name was derived from where he was found; the metro station i feel like this chapter is a chaotic mess but i wanted to get in a few things and phil's intro fit where it was along with SAPNAP HERO NAME!!  
was gonna ask you guys who you thought the mysterious figure man was but when i wrote that the birds were crows i knew it'd be obvious anyway lmaoo  
and ofc it wouldn't be a mel fic without a cat in it. im sorry i just love them so much

tragedy: wilbur

comedy: techno

vertigo: tubbo

glitch: ranboo

melatonin: george

MATCHBOX/MATCH: sapnap

mirage: dream



# i'm still alive but i'm barely breathing

## Chapter Summary

“Hey kid, I’ve got some questions for ya,” he started, as blunt as a baseball bat.

Tommy scowled at him, catching Wilbur and the other man shifting with similar huffs of annoyance. He couldn’t help but resonate with the feeling, woken up so suddenly by the hero’s arrogance. For some reason, the presence of the hero didn’t scare him, he only felt indignation.

“It’s ’Doctor’, to *you*,” the words slipped out his mouth before he could filter himself, glaring at the man. Tommy never cared much about people calling him by his title, it was just a respect thing. But now, seeing one of the reasons he had to have it in the first place, he felt some bitter resentment.

## Chapter Notes

// hospital, panic attack

yah. we back again with anotha one hoes!

thanks for 16k hits already, thats crazy!! :D

chapter title is a lyric from [Breakeven by The Script](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As soon as Tommy fell asleep, Wilbur’s smile fell and he buried his head in his hands, sighing. It was one thing for him to take away his father’s anxiety or Techno’s frustration, but it was different when Tommy had no idea he was using his power on him. *Different from when he used his powers on his vi- enemies.*

But just *standing outside of the room* he could feel the wafts of fear and guilt and- too many emotions to count. So when he saw him, so terribly small and burdened as he laid to recover, with dark semi-circles under his haunted eyes, Wilbur could only see what he could do to fix it. That being; slowly liberating him from the emotions that were clearly keeping him from resting and getting better.

It made him feel immensely guilty, especially as the boy expressed his concerns for Techno and all the other people that had been endangered. But, he knew Tommy needed sleep more than answers at the moment, not that Wilbur had many answers to give. He himself was still mostly in the dark, only able to put together bits and pieces of what happened.

Wilbur got the call first when Techno was admitted to the hospital, he had no clue why he would be out so late out of costume, and that's why it confused him even more.

When he got there, no one was able to tell anything he didn't already know, they only tried to restrict him to the lobby while he anxiously waited to hear news about his twin. Admittedly, he had gotten a *little* angry and demanded to see his brother, eventually taking things into his own hands and following a nurse to his operating room. Then he saw Tommy...

He couldn't place what exactly went through his head when he made the connection; Tommy was the doctor performing on Techno. Disbelief maybe. He hadn't known what to think.

When the doors shut he had been dragged out of the hospital, questions running through his head rapidly. He didn't have much time to think before the bombs started going off and people were flooding out of the hospital. Wilbur didn't see Techno or Tommy, which made sense because *they were in surgery*. But he still found himself searching for them through the crowds, fear thrumming through his veins with a rush of adrenaline.

Heroes arrived on the scene when Wilbur was on the phone with his father, explaining that he couldn't find Techno. That he feared something wrong was happening inside.

After that his father took things into his own hands and the bombs had tapered off and he was ushered into a safe area with civilians.

When his father got back to him with the news of a hitman trying to kill Techno mid-surgery, he was suspicious. There weren't many people who knew their identities, but he doubted any of those people would go as far as create a diversion just to kill Techno.

Nothing and everything made sense at the same time. The biggest thing being that Tommy apparently refused to leave Techno's side, even when threatened with a gun. The idea sent a range of emotions flaring through Wilbur, some part deep down knowing he wouldn't have been so reckless if it hadn't been Wilbur's twin brother on the operating table.

So here he sat, hand holding Tommy's own limp one, trying to put the pieces together. Trying to figure the boy out.

...

The door opened behind him and he didn't have to look to recognize the distinct pattern of his father's footsteps. The emotions his father had grown used to carrying around were familiar to Wilbur in a way he couldn't describe.

"Hey, Dad," Wilbur said with a sigh, turning away from where he had been looking over Tommy's pale face to his father.

"You never tell me how you do that," he muttered, walking over and putting a hand on his shoulder. He had changed back into his civilian work clothes, and sloppily so. His hair was long enough to tuck behind his ears, all in a messy array. Wilbur held back a comment about a haircut. All these things made his usually put-together father look disheveled. Which, now that he thought about it, probably applied to him as well.

Wilbur laughed but didn't explain, only grinning up at the blond man with something smug. "One day," he said vaguely, relishing under the man's fond gaze. "How's Techno doing?"

"He's just fine, Wil. They said he'll be outta here by the end of the day most likely," he answered immediately, a calmness in his words that Wilbur knew was forced for his benefit. His expression was expertly indifferent and his voice didn't waver, like he had prepared for the question. He probably had, considering Wilbur's reputation for being paranoid. "Same as when you left the room."

The silence grew as his father's eyes landed on the boy in the hospital bed, doctor ID on display where it was pinned to his breast pocket. Wilbur had mentioned Tommy to his father before, singing the boy's praises. His father had been happy he made a friend outside of his dangerous workplace, but it seemed his worlds had collided the moment Tommy saved him as Tragedy that day. Something he still had yet to reflect on.

"Is he okay?" He asked, finding no glaring injuries on the kid.

"He should be," was Wilbur's answer, a frown on his face. "I had to... help him fall asleep. He's scared."

Phil nodded and didn't lecture him about it, shifting on his feet while idly putting his hands in his pants pockets. "When I uh *met* him earlier he could barely stand, I felt bad I couldn't get him out of the building without being rough. Kid wouldn't leave Techno's side."

Wilbur shook his head fondly, sighing. "I'm glad he didn't but..." he trailed off, his father understood anyway.

"He's a strong kid, I'm sure he'll be fine, Wil. Stubborn boy, he is."

Wilbur chuckled, giving his father an appreciative smile.

"Techno wants to see him, or he did- when he first woke up."

"They put him under again?"

"Yeah, he started insulting the nurses when they didn't let him leave, demanding to see his 'savior'."

Wilbur let out a startled snort and his grin grew, he would not be letting that go for a while.

"They gave him some pretty strong stuff, I could barely understand what he was sayin' through all the slurring," he continued with a light laugh.

Wilbur laughed with him and it slowly tapered off, he turned and raised an eyebrow at his father. "He's in there alone?"

"Of course not," Phil scoffed, crossing his arms. "I stayed with him until guards got there. I don't care how tough he thinks he is, I'm not risking it."

Wilbur nodded, he didn't doubt his father in the slightest, it was just another concern of his, mostly irrational. "Good."

It was quiet for another moment. "He looks sick, are you sure it was just an overuse of his power?"

Wilbur knew immediately who he was talking about and his eyes flitted back over to Tommy, chest rising and falling with little breaths. "I don't know, he was asleep at first but he wasn't in the emotional state to have done that on his own..."

"You think it was something other than the hospital drugs?"

"Dad, he was out cold by the time he got to safety, the other nurses and doctors who had escaped the building wouldn't leave his side."

"So... is that a yes?"

"Yes," Wilbur breathed, a frown pulling at his features. "Melatonin was on the scene."

Phil nodded, catching onto what he was meaning.

"That makes me nervous," he started, shaking his head as he spoke. "Melatonin doesn't give two shits about his duty to the civilians, only the upkeep of his reputation."

"Give him the benefit of the doubt, mate. He got Tommy to safety, isn't that what matters now?"

Wilbur shot his father a look. "He told me himself, he doesn't care about *anything*."

"I'm not defending him, Wil. Just looking at things objectively."

Wilbur's shoulders slumped and he nodded, fidgeting with his hands. "Sorry, I just- I'm worried he's on their radar now. I mean- he saw you, they're definitely going to have questions..."

Phil's face morphed into something a little guilty. "You're right. We can only hope they won't involve him any more than he already is. He's just a kid."

"I know," Wilbur said, turning and looking at the boy in question. "I know."

~ + ~

Tommy woke up again to arguing. It wasn't a pleasant sound to hear and it grated on his ears.

He blinked open sticky eyes and his vision slowly came into focus. Standing in front of his hospital bed was Wilbur and a slightly shorter, blonde man. Their voices were quiet,

obviously trying not to wake him.

But the man standing in the doorway had his hands on his hips and his whisper was about as delicate as a dumpster fire.

“-my job. I have to talk to him about what he saw,” Matchbox said, hands clenched into fists.

“Can’t it wait? He’s clearly-“ Wilbur’s sharp tone cut off abruptly as he made eye contact with Tommy.

“He’s awake,” Matchbox stated plainly, shoving past Wilbur and sitting in the chair the brunette had been in when he fell asleep. Looking around the room, Tommy wished Sally would come back. She seemed like the type to drag Matchbox out by his ear. “Hey kid, I’ve got some questions for ya,” he started, as blunt as a baseball bat.

Tommy scowled at him, catching Wilbur and the other man shifting with similar huffs of annoyance. He couldn’t help but resonate with the feeling, woken up so suddenly by the hero’s arrogance. For some reason, the presence of the hero didn’t scare him, he only felt indignation.

“It’s ‘Doctor’, to *you*,” the words slipped out his mouth before he could filter himself, glaring at the man. Tommy never cared much about people calling him by his title, it was just a respect thing. But now, seeing one of the reasons he had to have it in the first place, he felt some bitter resentment.

The smirk stretching on Wilbur’s face and the look of amusement from the man beside him didn’t go unnoticed by Tommy, especially as Matchbox’s face contorted with a sneer. “Okay then. I have some questions for you, *Doctor* .”

Tommy said nothing but the victorious grin on his face spoke more than words could.

“First thing,” Matchbox turned to Wilbur and the other man, crossing his arms. “I need you two out of the room.”

Wilbur’s face morphed into a scowl and he scoffed. “Hell no.”

“Leave. This is a private matter,” the hero continued, body language tense.

“I’d rather them stay here,” Tommy interjected, leaning forward and wincing as it sent an ache down his body.

Matchbox turned to him and even behind the white fabric wrapped around his head, covering his eyes, he could tell the man was pissed. “Why do you need them in here?”

Tommy shrugged. “Emotional support.”

Matchbox rolled his eyes and dragged a hand down his masked face, sighing. “This is confidential.”

“I’m good with secrets,” Wilbur snarked, the man next to him laughed.

“Fine, sit down and stay quiet.”

Wilbur and the blond man obliged with equally smug looks.

Matchbox turned back to Tommy, exasperation evident in his features. “Okay, first thing. What happened?”

“I was performing surgery, then-“

“On who?”

Tommy paused, glancing at Wilbur for a split second. “Is that really relevant?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’m sorry, I can’t say. Patient confidentiality and all that,” Tommy didn’t sound sorry in the slightest.

The hero pursed his lips and sighed. “Fine, we’ll check the records later.”

“Illegal,” the blond man interrupted. Matchbox turned to glare at him. “You have no jurisdiction over-“

“You’d be surprised what I have *jurisdiction* over, Mr. Craft. So kindly, shut up and let me talk to my witness,” the hero hissed, knuckles tightening around the armchairs. “As I was saying, we’ll just check the records later. Continue.”

“Well, I was operatin’ on my patient and the bombs go off followed by the alarms. So my nurses leave and I stay, trying to... retrieve the last metal shard embedded in my patient’s chest. After I got the patient stable a- a man with a gun walked in,” Tommy trailed off, pursing his lips to avoid making a face. “He held me at gunpoint and I panicked, threatened him with...”

“With what?”

“A scalpel,” Tommy answered with a slight huff of laughter. “After that... I can’t really uh remember.”

Matchbox stared at him for a moment before nodding. “Okay, next question.”

Tommy raised an eyebrow at the lack of pushing the hero did on the subject, accepting his story without question.

It was after a moment, he got half an answer.

Everyone was quiet as Matchbox pulled his phone out and held it up to Tommy, revealing footage from the hospital before the alarms were going off. It paused when Tommy was seen entering the room, adjusting his gloves.

Wilbur and... Wilbur's father (?) leaned forward but wasn't able to see anything from their angle. "This is you, correct?"

Tommy nodded, eyebrows furrowing.

"How did you escape the hospital?"

Everyone except the hero froze, Tommy was tense as the footage sped up to when the alarms were going off. The gunman entered and a minute later the cameras fritzed out, static buzzing the screen with flashing colors. "I-" he hesitated, looking down at his hands. "I can't remember," he answered softly, sheepish and genuine. "I can't... remember."

Matchbox's demeanor shifted and he sat up, putting the phone down with a strange emotion on his face. "That's okay," he said quietly, reassuring and completely contrasting his previous attitude. "That's... I think that's enough questions," Matchbox stood up, looking at Tommy with a conflicted gaze before turning away and walking to the door. "Thank you," he added belatedly, opening the door and leaving without another word.

The room was silent as Wilbur stood up from his chair and sat back down in the one Matchbox had been in, lips pursed. "You okay?"

Tommy nodded, sighing in exhaustion. Trying to think about how he escaped the hospital only made his headache worse, making him squeeze his eyes shut. When he opened them he frowned at the specks of light floating around him. That was not good.

"Tommy?"

He swiveled his head around and the lights stayed at the corners of his vision when he focused on Wilbur's face. "Hm?"

"Are you sure? Should I get the nurse?"

"I'm fine, Wilbur," he insisted, waving his hand.

Wilbur frowned but didn't push it further, throwing a glance at the blond man who was enraptured by something on his phone, clearly not trying to intrude. He opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by the door flinging open.

Everyone's heads snapped up to see a disheveled Tubbo standing in the doorway, wide eyes locking onto Tommy's own. "Tommy!" He said, throwing himself across the room to Tommy's side in astonishing speed.

His hands clutched the sides of Tommy's face as he spoke a thousand words a second. "What happened? Are you okay? Why didn't you call me? I heard there were bombs-"

"Tubbo. *Tubbo*, slow down, big man. I'm fine," he assured, grabbing Tubbo's wrists to prevent him from fretting.

"I'm sorry, I tried to stop him," a familiar voice chimed from the doorway, resigned and tired. Tommy looked around Tubbo to see Ranboo leaning against the doorframe, his head ducked

to avoid hitting the frame. “Tubbo, give him some space!”

Tubbo reluctantly dropped his hands from Tommy’s face and took a *single*, deliberate step back, next to where Wilbur was sitting rather awkwardly. “You didn’t call me,” Tubbo stated, crossing his arms. “The hospital didn’t even call me until- a few minutes ago...”

“This is why you aren’t allowed to drive- I was *unconscious*,” Tommy retorted, crossing his own arms. He leveled him a glare, they both seemed to mentally run through their options; fighting, forgiveness, or forgetting. The three ‘f’s they typically switched between.

It was Tubbo who chose this time, backing down with a sigh. “It’s okay. But are you? I- what happened?”

“I’ll tell you later, Tubs. I’m... I’m tired,” he admitted, lowering his head a little. He was physically tired, but he was also tired of repeating himself. And he especially was too tired to repeat the situation to *Tubbo* of all people. *He also didn’t want to repeat the scenario in his head, the fear fresh on his mind, clinging to his fragile mental health like a lifeline.*

The room grew tense as they awaited Tubbo’s response, which was surprisingly rational. “Okay.”

He turned and gave the other people in the room a sheepish smile and pulled a chair up on the other side of Tommy’s bed, across from Wilbur. He narrowed his eyes at the man and Wilbur just stared back.

“You’re Wilbur,” Tubbo accused abruptly, Ranboo silently taking his seat behind the boy.

Wilbur nodded, glancing at Tommy out of the corner of his eye. “I am,” he agreed, smiling a little at Tommy’s embarrassed look. “I’m guessing you’re Tubbo.”

“Yep,” Tubbo turned to the blond man, presumably Wilbur’s father. “And you are?”

“I’m Phil, Wil’s dad,” he answered, tipping his head at him and confirming Tommy’s suspicions.

Tubbo pivoted back to Wilbur with an expression Tommy had grown used to seeing on the boy, it never meant anything good. “Your record is clean,” he stated, Tommy groaned in annoyance. He didn’t even give Tubbo Wilbur’s full name, how the hell did he find his records?

Wilbur raised an eyebrow. “You looked up... my criminal record?”

“Yeah,” Tubbo shrugged, like it was nothing. He didn’t elaborate, instead, he turned to Tommy with an expectant look. “You wanna go home?”

Tommy pursed his lips. In all honesty, he didn’t want to go home. He didn’t want to sit in the awkward silence of Ranboo’s car as they drove back. He didn’t want to have to acknowledge his and Tubbo’s fight once they got inside. He was far too tired for an argument.



But he also didn't want to sit in the hospital, the idle sounds of his co-workers and patients buzzing at the back of his mind. So, against the stubborn part of him that wanted to stay just to spite Tubbo, he nodded.

...

It took some convincing to keep Tommy from just ripping his IV out on the spot, waiting a few minutes for the nurse in tense silence. Wilbur and Tommy were able to keep up some sort of semi-civil conversation about nothing in particular, but not without Tubbo's obvious annoyed glare flickering between them.

When Sally finally made it into the room she raised the spirits up and assured everyone Tommy would be fine, letting them know he dealt with power drains regularly. For some reason, that fact made the people in the room frown, Tommy supposed it was only normal in his field of work.

After that, he said goodbye to Wilbur and the man ruffled his hair before he and his father made their way back to Techno's room.

The drive home was as tense as he predicted, with him sitting in the front at Ranboo's insistence. Which was probably more for him than for Tommy's sake, but he didn't have to look in Tubbo's direction and for that, he was grateful.

...

Tommy was able to escape to his room without further communication with Tubbo, having half the mind to change out of his scrubs before collapsing onto his bed.

~ + ~

It was the weekend again, it was the first thing he thought about when he woke up. Judging by the orange light pouring through his blinds, Tommy knew it was sometime in the afternoon.

For some reason, Tommy didn't feel like getting up. Not just to avoid Tubbo, but he felt a heavy weight on his chest and he found his limbs not wanting to leave the warmth of his covers.

He stayed in bed, staring at the ceiling and wishing the sun would leave him alone. The more he stayed unfocused, the anxiety was a familiar presence in his head.

It was something he was used to, though he probably shouldn't be. The way he was able to stare off into nothingness and lose himself in a daydream so easily for so long should be a concern. But the buzzing it kept in his brain made things seem smaller, being able to lose himself in his thoughts.

Tommy pulled his covers over his head, squeezing his eyes shut. Emotions springing to him that he had previously pushed away, able to distract himself in his work or interacting with people.

The way his heart hurt in a way he couldn't describe, phantom pains of things he never truly had. It opened his mind up for self-induced torture, a conflicting urge to wallow in pity for himself.

All at once, everything crashed down on him as he recounted the past days events. The shaking of his usually steady hands while he stared down the barrel of a gun. The sick sound of someone being impaled. Blood spilling on the ground in a splatter of black and dark red. The harsh screaming of a heart monitor flatlining, panic gripping his lungs in a chokehold. The feeling of being *weak*. So weak.

Tommy's throat closed up and he breathed in through his nose as much as he could until his breaths were coming too quick, suffocating. He pressed his cold hand to his collarbone where it felt as though he had swallowed a big pill, lodged in his windpipe.

He quickly threw the covers off of his head, wincing at the brightness in the room and the chilly air. He took in a gasp of air and put his hands on the sides of his head, eyes eerily dry.

Tommy stared down at the sheets in front of him, half of his brain trying to think of anything else, the other half craved the comfort of the pain.

He knew he wasn't okay, but he atleast thought he was getting better. He didn't think it was this bad... he also... couldn't let Tubbo be right.

Tommy was just grateful his mind knew when it was an okay time to freak out, his door was locked and the air conditioning was louder than his breathing. He would be fine alone.

...

Eventually, he was able to calm himself down. Staring down at the pattern of his covers, matching the earth toned theme of his room.

Tommy's lungs ached and his head hurt, enough to make him lay back down and close his eyes.

He pursed his lips and fidgeted constantly with the fabric laid on top of him, a strange feeling of embarrassment flushing his face. He got worked up over nothing, absolutely *nothing* caused him to freak out except for his own mind.

Tommy exhaled, long and drawn out.

He stood up and walked to his door, hand curling around the doorknob nervously.

He listened on the other side and after a moment of hearing nothing, he opened it.

Tommy went down the stairs, peering down the halls and into the kitchen. Tubbo was nowhere to be seen.

He sighed in relief and paused when he passed the bathroom. Tommy took a few steps off track into the small room and washed his hands with cold water.

He reluctantly looked up and caught sight of himself in the mirror. Tired, bloodshot eyes stared back at him with a haunted gaze. His hair was a mess, wild in an array of curls that made him look feral.

Tommy shoved his hands in his hair and combed through it with his fingers in an attempt to tame it. He noted how his hair was long enough to just barely poke him in the eyes, itching at the nape of his neck. Tommy was probably due for a haircut, he just... thought he got one not too long ago.

Tommy brushed off the thought and tore his eyes away from the mirror.

Maybe a walk outside would do him some good.

## Chapter End Notes

yeahhhh depression sucks! Laugh Out Loud 🐱💧

anyway i wonder where he might go aha aha.. wonder when he'll see techno again..  
cough cough.

# you know what i mean?

## Chapter Summary

Techno sighed and looked at him with something apprehensive, hands pausing where he was drying his hands. “Hey Tommy,” he started sheepishly, eyebrows furrowing as he searched for the right words to say.

“Hm?” He hummed, looking up at him.

“Thank you,” he said quietly. “For savin’ me,” he added, looking anywhere but him. “You risked your life for me and that- I don’t even know what to say. But without you I wouldn’t...” he trailed off, scratching the back of his neck.

## Chapter Notes

// brief suicidal ideation

hey guys, back with another chaptussy 😞😏  
you guys are going to like this one! :D

chapter title is a lyric from [YKWIM? by Yot Club](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sun was definitely lower than before, casting a pinkish hue over the horizon. Cars were still buzzing by and the streetlights had yet to turn on.

Tommy peered down every alleyway he passed, hands at his sides rather than in his pockets. The biting cold of winter was not merciful and after a while, his fingers started to tingle. They wouldn’t be much use in a fight, not that he would have a chance without them working properly.

He found his feet moving him in a familiar direction, not that he minded. Techno and Wilbur likely wouldn’t be there, but he was planning on enjoying the familiar atmosphere nonetheless.

Tommy opened the door with his numb fingers, being hit with a wave of warmth, he shuddered. He walked up to the counter and his eyebrows furrowed when he spotted a man with pink hair, cleaning the espresso machine.

Techno turned around with his mouth open in a practiced greeting that came to a screeching halt when he saw Tommy. “What are you doing here?” Tommy asked, completely confused. He was not allowed to be on his feet for at least a few days. Especially with the possibility that Tommy missed something that could still be wedged somewhere in his skin, slowly tearing him apart. He needed to be on stand by should anything go wrong. It was surgery protocol. Clearly, Techno didn’t get the memo.

“Workin’ obviously,” Techno deadpanned, strangely sheepish as he avoided Tommy’s eyes.

“Are you kidding me?” He sputtered, ignoring how a couple of customers looked at him. “You had surgery the other day! You should be in bed healing!”

Tommy had gotten his fair share of stubborn patients, trying to do things themselves or get up and walk around before it was safe to. But going to work while on mandatory bed rest was a different level.

“How did you get out of the hospital?”

Techno shrugged, leaning against the counter. “Wil’s a heavy sleeper. I just left.”

Tommy just stared at him, mouth agape. “You’re here and Wilbur doesn’t even know?”

Techno looked back up at him and smirked a little. “Yep.”

“Why?”

“‘Cause I felt like it.”

Tommy shook his head, a smile forming on his face he couldn’t try to hide. “You just felt like going to work? What’s wrong with you?”

Though it was a light tease, Techno still answered very seriously. “Too many things t’ count.”

Tommy laughed and Techno smiled, huffing out a chuckle. “Seriously though, what’s stopping me from calling Wilbur and telling him you’re here?”

Techno narrowed his eyes at him, eyes glancing behind him. “That’d just be cruel. I don’t want him annoyin’ me right now.”

“Right,” Tommy scoffed, rolling his eyes. A silence fell over them and Techno wiped up the area around the espresso machine, both of them not knowing what to say. Tommy found himself replaying something in his head from before. “Your dad said you called me your savior.”

Techno tensed and turned to throw him a glare that was nowhere near as intimidating as he clearly hoped it was, pink hair had fallen out of his low bun, wisping in his face, and he was wearing a pastel apron that had a cloud with a cutesy smiley face on it. “I didn’t say that,” he denied shortly, wiping the counter a little more vigorously.

“Hmm,” Tommy hummed, perching his chin on his hand, leaning against the counter. “I didn’t take your father as a liar.”

Techno pursed his lips and sighed, trying to keep the embarrassment off his face. “That was just the drugs talkin’, not me.”

“Okay, Techno.”

Techno scowled up at him for a moment before he shook his head and continued cleaning up the area around him. “I liked you better when Wilbur was your target for bullyin’,” he huffed.

“I liked you better when I thought you were the more responsible twin,” Tommy retorted, grinning when Techno let out a subtle gasp.

“I *am* the more responsible twin! Have you ever seen that man eat *sand*?”

Tommy burst out laughing, the idea of Wilbur eating sand so easily painted in his head. “You got me there.”

Techno smiled victoriously and opened his mouth to speak, only to be cut off by the sound of the bell ringing at the door, followed by a loud voice. “*Technoblade Craft*! You little shit!” Phil’s voice boomed as he stormed up to the counter, giving Tommy an apologetic glance as he rounded to where Techno was. “You’re supposed to be resting!”

Techno shrugged, a blank stare on his face.

“The car’s outside. I need a word with Puffy,” he huffed, pursing his lips and walking into the staff only room.

Techno turned back to Tommy with an embarrassed laugh. “Looks like he found me,” he said awkwardly, taking his apron off.

“No kidding.”

Techno sighed and looked at him with something apprehensive, hands pausing where he was drying his hands. “Hey Tommy,” he started sheepishly, eyebrows furrowing as he searched for the right words to say.

“Hm?” He hummed, looking up at him.

“Thank you,” he said quietly. “For savin’ me,” he added, looking anywhere but him. “You risked your life for me and that- I don’t even know what to say. But without you I wouldn’t...” he trailed off, scratching the back of his neck.

“It’s no problem really,” Tommy assured with a smile, understanding what he was saying.

Techno nodded and pursed his lips but didn’t say anymore. Phil appeared behind him and grabbed his arm, pulling him away from the counter.

“Seeya Tommy!” Phil waved, ignoring Techno’s grumbling.

“Bye!”

Tommy smiled and it lingered there for a while, a warm feeling in his chest.

~ + ~

“What were you thinking?!” Phil scolded, throwing his hands up. His father had at least waited until he was back in bed, comfortable for a long lecture. Wilbur was sitting in the room on his phone, trying to eavesdrop subtly. It wasn’t working.

“I was *bored* . Honestly I’m fine, not even hurting.”

“Techno, you were almost *assassinated* . Let that sink in,” Phil stressed, crossing his arms and actually giving him a second for the words to sink in. “You went out without Wilbur or I knowing where you were, without someone to protect you. Whether you want to admit it or not you are vulnerable right now and normally people who want you dead don’t give up after failing once!”

Techno pursed his lips, huffing.

“Hell, we don’t even know *who* is trying to kill you! So please, Techno, explain to me your thought process!”

Wilbur poorly covered up a snicker and Techno shot him a glare. “I thought I’d be fine, and I *was* ,” he said, crossing his arms. “I can take care of myself.”

“You just proved the opposite to me.”

“You let Wilbur do whatever he wants,” he grumbled, ignoring how Wilbur just rolled his eyes, disbelieving.

“Maybe that’s because Wilbur listens to me, especially when he is injured.”

Techno scoffed, catching Wilbur’s widening eyes out of the corner of his vision. “That’s because he’s a whiny bitch.”

“I’d rather a whiny bitch than a dead bitch.”

Phil and Techno stared at each other for a moment and Techno’s blood was boiling, overflowing. “Wilbur almost died in a fight with Mirage at the warehouse and he didn’t tell you!” He blurted, Wilbur’s face dropped in pure betrayal.

Phil’s head whipped around to Wilbur with a surprised look. “Is that true?”

Wilbur scowled at Techno and reluctantly nodded, pursing his lips.

“Yeah, and he tried to patch up the giant gash where the sword went through him with *convenience store* bandages,” Techno added, putting up a smug expression to shove down the guilt he felt that Wilbur had been in that situation at all.

“I did not!”

“Yes, you did! I had to send a team in to clean up your mess!”

Phil just stared between the two, completely in shock. “What!? Mess?”

“The blood,” Techno answered his question simply. “And the broken window.”

“Wilbur... how did...?”

Wilbur continued to stare at the floor, Techno looked away but eventually answered for him. “Tommy uh... was walking by and... he came in and healed him.”

Phil gasped and started pacing the room, hands dragging down his face. “You two are going to give me one too many heart attacks someday,” he muttered, running a hand through his hair he looked up with a start. “Did Tommy know it was you?”

Wilbur sighed and shook his head. “No. I didn’t know it was him either until... until I was fixed.”

“That poor boy,” Phil mumbled under his breath, shaking his head. “You said you were in a convenience store, did you delete the security camera footage?”

Techno rolled his eyes. “Course I did.”

“You’re sure you left no blood?”

“Positive.”

Phil sighed and sat back down, burying his face in his hands.

“You’re not mad?” Wilbur asked sheepishly, fidgeting with his sleeves. He stopped doing it when he realized it was something he had picked up from Tommy.

Phil looked up at him and exhaled deeply through his nose, Wilbur could feel the emotions flooding off of him. “No, I’m furious, Wilbur,” he said, even though Wilbur already knew that. “I’m furious because both of my children thought it would be best to keep important, life-threatening things from me.”

Both of them were quiet as Phil just shook his head again.

“You two might be adults, but in our line of... work it’s different. A slip up could cost you your life and I want to know about every single one. Unless you want me to start babysitting you on jobs again.”



Techno and Wilbur both shook their heads, remembering how Phil didn't let them even join his operation for years. Then when they were finally out in the field, after months of training, he monitored their every move. Telling them to be more careful and fussing over every little thing.

"Okay, just... put some trust in me," he sighed, relenting. "I wouldn't have gotten mad that you almost died," Phil added, some hurt in his voice. It was silent for a moment as Wilbur just nodded, regret in his features. "Can I see?"

Wilbur looked up and his father was radiating worry, so much so it was manifesting in a visual aura of indigo around him that only Wilbur could see. "Okay, but it's not pretty."

Phil nodded and he lifted his shirt up, looking at Techno rather than his father, who admittedly wasn't much better. His face scrunched up in a grimace and his face was paler than before. He heard his father gasp and Phil stood up and walked over to get a better look

Wilbur looked down himself and winced, the dark pink and white scar tissue was poorly blended in a diamond shape on his abdomen. There was an equally proportionate scar the exact same shape on his back where the sword went through, twisted, and was yanked out. He should've died on the spot, but Wilbur could take more than most. "It's getting better," he defended weakly, pulling his shirt back down.

"You said Mirage did that?" Phil asked, jaw tense as he sat back down, eyes lingering on him.

"Yeah, he found me digging through some files at that secondary hero warehouse. I didn't think he'd be there so he kinda caught me off guard. Didn't have time to pull my weapon and defend myself."

Phil tried not to make it obvious when he looked up at Techno, expectant. "I was on the other side of the buildin'. Didn't know anyone else was there 'til I uh... *heard* Wilbur," he winced at his phrasing but continued to explain himself. "By the time I found Mirage, Wil was gone. So I fought him until he left me alone. After, I went lookin' for Wilbur and found him perfectly fine, albeit covered in blood, carryin' none other than his new friend, Tommy."

Wilbur took in a sharp breath at the reminder, guilty even though it logically wasn't his fault Tommy inserted himself into the situation. He could've left him, and he should've. It would've been easier and safer for him. But Wilbur won't go and say he isn't thankful the boy was there.

"He was in some standoff with those two newer vigilantes, Vertigo and Glitch. They were askin' for Tommy. I jumped in and we chased them off while Tommy woke up and got away."

Phil nodded along, eyebrows furrowed as he pieced the story together. "Something isn't adding up."

"Like what?" Wilbur inquired, resting his head on his fist.

“Why Mirage was there, it doesn’t make sense he would already be at some low-security building like that. Especially for the files I was having you look for.”

“Well, we didn’t find them. Just a bunch of employee files. Normal, civilian people who work with the H.O.,” Techno shrugged, looking at Wilbur who confirmed his findings with a supportive nod.

“Strange,” Phil commented, thoughtful as he went over their words. “But, we’ll have to look into it another time. Our first priority is taking care of whoever sent a hitman after Techno.”

The twins nodded, though Techno wanted to disagree, wanting to uncover whatever the Hero’s Organization was hiding.

It seemed it would have to wait.

~ + ~

A week passed and Tommy hadn’t been out at all. He had gone home and had a long conversation with Tubbo, apologizing to him and getting an apology in return. But after that his energy was depleted so he stayed inside.

He was supposed to go back to work the next day, so he wanted to go out and use his last day of freedom, bask in the sunlight while he could.

It was later in the afternoon, it had taken Tubbo practically breaking down his door and peeling him out of bed to get up, but he did so nonetheless. He had gone to the alleyway where he had seen that pregnant cat and searched for her. Upon not finding her, he left out some cat food, hoping somehow it would get back to her. After that, he had nothing to do.

With nowhere else in particular to go, Tommy trekked the familiar route to the train station.

Tommy, like last time, stayed near the wall until the train pulled up. An irrational fear that he would somehow end up near the edge again seized his lungs and made his hands sweat, even in the cold.

When it arrived, he sat at the far end of the train, staring off at nothing in particular with his hands folded together neatly. The seats started to fill up, it only made sense since it was midday. He didn’t pay anyone much mind until a particularly loud, bald man clambered his way through, apologizing every time he ran into someone.

The nearest open seat happened to be right next to Tommy, who reluctantly moved his messenger bag out of the way. He gave the man a close-lipped smile as he collapsed into the seat next to him. “Thanks, mate,” the man said with a thick accent Tommy couldn’t quite place. He turned and squinted at the blonde for a moment before deciding to strike up a conversation. “How are ya?”

“I’m good,” Tommy replied, finding the man’s unbothered attitude amusing. “You?”

“I’m just great, me,” the man said, sitting up in his seat a little more. “Where’re you headed to?”

Tommy raised an eyebrow at him, trying to figure out if the question was creepy or not. After deciding the man wasn’t a threat and Tommy could probably take him in a fight, he answered honestly. “Going to see my friend.”

“Ah, that’s nice,” he nodded, the movement slightly exaggerated. If Tommy didn’t know better, he would’ve thought the man was on drugs. “Personally, I’m off to me ‘ome. My roommate’s makin’ dinner this time ‘round and I don’t want the food to be all cold. That’s why I’m in a rush. She’s an amazing cook- she bakes sometimes too.”

“She sounds very cool,” Tommy smiled, the description of the man’s roommate sounded vaguely familiar. “My roommate’s a pretty good cook too.”

“Is that so?”

“Mhm.”

“Bet they’re not better than my roommate, she’s the best.”

Tommy just laughed, imagining how Tubbo would’ve reacted to the challenge. “Maybe. Probably not though.”

The man scoffed, amusement obvious on his face which Tommy was thankful for. The last thing he wanted was to provoke a crazy man on the train. “You’re simply wrong.”

“Hmm I don’t think I am.”

“Whatever you say, man,” he shrugged dramatically, slumping back in his seat.

Tommy smiled and shook his head, thinking of another comeback.

After that, Tommy talked with the man for a while, a very vast change from his usual routine of staring off at nothing to avoid thinking about the weight of the train hitting him. He had learned a lot about the man during his time sitting next to him. For instance, his name was Jack Manifold and he was a journalist for The L’Manburg News Station. He loved going around looking for stories, often on hero, villain, and vigilante activity.

Tommy had listened to a few of his rambles about his newest find, something about vigilantes going to the ‘dark side’ by committing unforgivable crimes. Listening to Jack was entertaining to say the least, so he was kind of sad to say goodbye when his stop came up.

“Don’t worry, Tom. I’m sure I’ll see you ‘round,” Jack assured, waving at him exaggeratedly. He noticed every movement the man did was exaggerated and enthusiastic, like he had jumped right out of an old cartoon.

“Alright, bye Jack!” He waved back, albeit a way more subtly, and got off the train.

Tommy walked to 2 Melodies with a skip in his step.

...

He opened the door and was hit with a wave of warm air, his hands uncurled from his coat pockets as he watched Wilbur talk to a customer from across the room. The brunette was talking and gesturing with his hands while pointing to different guitars and ukuleles on the walls, likely suggesting what he thought was the best fit for the customer.

The customer was nodding along, asking quiet questions Tommy couldn't quite hear, but they seemed enraptured by Wilbur's words. Like every word he said was important and they needed to soak up every one.

Tommy waited patiently by the counter at the front, not wanting to interrupt Wilbur while he was actively working. Tommy had been told before he would be bad at retail jobs, considering his 'personality'. So he never quite grasped how Wilbur seemed to be so flawless at it, capturing people in the simplest of conversations.

Tommy thought Wilbur could probably convince someone to buy bottled air.

A voice from behind the counter made him jump. "Hey Tommy," Techno's voice came quiet and he had to peer over the counter to see him.

Tommy had to try hard to not laugh when he actually caught sight of the man.

Curled up in a comfortable-looking beanbag, Techno was hiding behind the counter, phone in hand. Tommy resisted the urge to compare him to a grubby little iPad kid, forced to sit at his parent's work because he was banned from daycare for biting other children.

"Hi Techno," he smiled, the thought making him snort, earning him a suspicious look from the man. "Wh-whatcha doin' behind the counter?" Tommy asked, biting his cheek to stop himself from laughing.

Techno seemed to notice and just scowled at him, glancing from behind the counter at Wilbur and the customer who had moved on to looking at other instruments. "Wilbur kidnapped me."

"Oh okay," Tommy accepted the answer easily with a scoff of betrayal from Techno. Tommy smirked and turned just in time to catch the moment Wilbur noticed him. His face lit up from his customer service expression into a giant grin Tommy couldn't help but mirror.

The customer was completely lost when Wilbur started walking away, arms outstretched as he crossed the store in a few mere seconds, *long-legged bitch*.

"Tommyyy!" He said, dragging out his name as he approached and pulled him into another one of his suffocating hugs. Tommy didn't find it in him to be annoyed though and only reached his arms around him in return.

"Wilburrr," Tommy parroted, grumbling a little when Wilbur didn't let him go right away out of embarrassment.

“How’ve you been? I haven’t seen you in like a week,” Wilbur asked, pulling away with his hands still on his shoulders.

“Good,” he lied on instinct, glancing at the customer who was now awkwardly rocking back and forth on their feet, looking at the ceiling. “How about you? I heard you’ve gotten yourself another victim.”

The words came out teasing but Wilbur furrowed his eyebrows like he was genuinely confused for a second before he laughed. “Right, Techno,” he chuckled, looking at the man who poked his head over the counter. “He’s not allowed to be alone until w- the police find whoever hired a hitman on him.”

Tommy snickered and Techno rolled his eyes, sitting back down to return to whatever he was doing on his phone. “So you’re babysitting him?”

Wilbur laughed and ruffled his hair. “Yep, he’s a little bitch,” he said, directed behind the counter. They both chuckled when Techno’s hand came up from behind the counter to flip them both off.

There was a moment of silence and Tommy broke it almost instantly, pointing lightly in the direction of the customer. “Don’t tell me you just left ‘em hangin’ over there.”

Wilbur’s eyes widened. “Oh shit, right.”

He turned on his heel and made it back to the customer, apologizing with a nervous hand scratching the back of his neck.

Tommy just smiled and collapsed into a comfortable couch, sighing as he took out his phone. He scrolled idly through the news and quickly regretted it, frowning at the sight of a story still talking about the bombings. No new information had been found so they only repeated what everyone already knew. It still upset him to see.

Tommy was vaguely mentioned in the story, and though he was flattered they called him a hero, staying with his patient. He would’ve rathered to not be referenced at all.

Hands landed on his shoulders and he flinched *violently*, looking up to see Wilbur standing behind him. He hadn’t even noticed the man was done talking to his customer, far too engrossed in the news article.

Wilbur removed his hands and leaned back, a saddened, guilty look on his face.

“Shit- fuck you! Don’t scare a man like that,” he hissed lightheartedly, slapping at his hands.

Wilbur just stared at him for a second, like he was trying to read his mind, before he hummed and rounded the couch, sitting next to him. “Jumpy today, are we?”

Tommy scoffed, rolling his eyes and setting his phone down, still open on the article. “No, you just startled me is all.”

“Mhm,” Wilbur raised an eyebrow at him, then his gaze glided over to Tommy’s open phone. The headline was there in bold letters, clear as day. Wilbur’s face dropped. “Oh.”

Tommy picked it up and turned it off, feeling slightly embarrassed for some reason. He fidgeted with the hem of his sleeves as Wilbur tilted his head at him.

“It’s okay, you know? To be scared,” he said softly, ducking his chin a little to meet his eyes.

Tommy lifted his head and pursed his lips, nodding slowly.

“You can talk to me, Tommy. You don’t have to keep everything in.”

Tommy considered his words, genuine and kind. A hope there that Tommy latched onto, desperate for that understanding that only Wilbur seemed to give. Similar words had been spoken to him before, but it wasn’t the same.

There was no ulterior motive, there was no underlying annoyance of just trying to get him to calm down. There was real care in his words, but not in the obsessive way that Tubbo cared. It was calming and he didn’t feel the need to rush to explain himself or his emotions, Wilbur just understood.

“I don’t know why... I just- I go back tomorrow. And I know I was at the hospital already but- it’s different. Being on the job, being responsible for all the sick and dying people there- I don’t know how I’ll go back to normal.”

He just nodded, letting Tommy continue.

“But, I know I will go back to normal, always will. I’m just scared anyway, for no reason.”

“It’s not for no reason, Tommy,” Wilbur frowned. “You were in a life or death situation. It’s normal to not want to go back to the place it happened.”

Tommy let a small smile on his face, something sad and thankful at the same time.

“There’s no reason to be ashamed of fear. Everyone has it but we all try to pretend it’s not there, but pretending only goes so far. Even the strongest of people get tired carrying the weight.”

Tommy noticed how Wilbur’s eyes briefly flicked over to the counter, where Techno was sitting behind. Most likely unaware of their heartfelt conversation.

“And you’re not alone, you have- you have your roommate and that nurse and your doctor friend,” Wilbur said, a smile of his own pulling at his features. “And you have me and you have Techno. You don’t have to worry, Tommy.”

Tommy sniffled and blinked at the blurriness coming into his vision, then he smiled. “Thank you, Wil. Really.”

Wilbur’s shoulders untensed a little, something Tommy hadn’t even noticed at first, and he nodded. “It’s no problem at all, Tommy.”

They sat there for another beat of silence before Tommy opened his arms, just barely, but enough for him to get the invitation. Wilbur grinned and wrapped him up in a hug, this one more meaningful and much less suffocating than the last.

Tommy found his shoulders feeling lighter than ever.

## Chapter End Notes

them 😞😞

how do u guys feel about the calmer chapter? you know i can't handle the calm for long, but i resist to keep the pacing consistent gsughdks

anyway lmk how you guys feel about the chapter and all the sweet moments, i love reading the comments, they make my day :))  
and also the not-so-sweet moments with phil's lecture lmao wilbur was bound to talk about THE incident at some point.

# when no one's at home for me

## Chapter Summary

Tommy only realized who he was looking at when he caught the smiley faces on each of the figures. *Mirage*. He couldn't withhold the gasp that escaped him, a hand coming up to slap over his mouth.

It was far too late to cover the noise and Tommy's stomach dropped when over a dozen eyes turned to him at the same time. The villains surrounded in the middle looked between him and the figures nervously, hands tightening on their weapons.

All at once, the alleyway ground turned into a pattern of bright colors, the trash and dumpsters flicking into weird shapes with random colors, suddenly lacking shadows.

## Chapter Notes

// violence/blood, injury desc, gaslighting, argument

2nd longest chapter so far, just barely less than the 1st by a whopping 7 words ☹☹ sorry its been longer than usual since i last updated, mostly bc it was my birthday last week and then some of my family visited, just been kinda busy in general, so here is this chapter! :))

chapter title is a lyric from [YKWIM? by Yot Club](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy went to work the next day with false bravado, chin high as he entered.

Niki was the first to see him, smiling brightly at him as he clocked in.

It had been strange at first, running through his usual motions as nothing had ever happened. Like he and his coworkers hadn't been scared to death just a week ago. Like the nurses who assisted him in surgery hadn't abandoned him at the first sight of danger. *Not that he could really blame them.*

The patients who had been in the hospital when it happened stared at him with a knowing gaze. While the new ones searched for the anonymous doctor who bravely stayed with his patient. They never guessed it to be him, which he was half offended and half grateful for.



Tommy didn't use his power as often as most people thought. At work, it wasn't *rare* to get open wounds that needed emergency healing, but it wasn't super common. Especially being surrounded by other doctors who could heal as well, left him doing usual doctor work. Most of which involved paperwork.

Not many knew that doctors had stacks of paperwork all the time, constantly documenting and prescribing and diagnosing. It all had deadlines and he sat at a small cubicle desk to do it during quiet hours.

Normally he dreaded doing paperwork. But now, he took it as a reprieve from the chaos of running from room to room.

So when Niki asked him to take his 'lunch' break with her, he just shook his head, scribbling something down he would probably have to rewrite in legible handwriting later.

She had frowned and stood there for a moment before turning and leaving, Tommy felt guilty for worrying her but otherwise continued working.

...

When his shift came to a calm close he was tired, but not as physically exhausted as he had been many times before.

Tommy waved goodbye to Niki, offering her a strained smile which she reciprocated with a bit of hesitance, and he left.

The sun wouldn't come up for another two hours at least, but Tommy still looked up to the sky and sighed. It was easier to see the light pollution in the dark, the flickering lamp posts a familiar presence.

He walked with his hands in his pockets, chin tucked into his neck a little to keep warm. His messenger bag lightly hit his side in a rhythmic tap, in tune with his steps.

Tommy still looked down the dark alleyways he passed, nervously awaiting something to jump out at him.

He made it to the lamp post that was out and paused, blinking up at it. Tommy shook his head and continued walking.

A rustling pulled him out of his mindless thoughts, eyes darting to the alleyway. Tommy was frozen until he saw the shadow of a familiar pregnant cat, waddling further into the alley.

Tommy grinned and walked down the alleyway without another thought, hands itching for his messenger bag where he knew a small baggie of cat food was. He had put it in there just in case he saw her, so he was excited to give her some of it.

He grabbed the bag out and put some in his hand, walking deeper into the alleyway, making a 'pspspsps' sound at the wary cat. She slowly came out from behind a trash bag, looking significantly larger than he last saw. He crouched down and held his hand out, palm up with the little cat food pellets on it.

The cat very cautiously crept forward and sniffed his hand, loosening up and eating a piece of food out of his hand. He smiled and slowly raised his free hand, lowering it onto her head and petting her.

“Hi,” he whispered, tilting his head down at her with a giddy grin. “What’s your name?” Tommy asked even though he was already thinking of one to give her, seeing as she couldn’t tell him one. After the silence stretched for a moment, the only sound being the cat crunching on the food, he decided on the name. “Clementine. I’ll name you Clementine.”

The cat looked up at him like she understood and pushed her head into his hand more, he just giggled quietly and scratched her head.

Clementine purred, almost silently, into the eerie atmosphere of the alleyway and Tommy just cooed, taking more food out to give her.

It was a calm and wholesome sight until something- or *someone* jumped down from the roof of the one-story building next to him.

Clementine immediately jumped and ran away, back raised defensively.

Tommy shot to his feet, cat food bag abandoned on the ground as he tightened his hands around the strap of his messenger bag.

In front of him was a tall figure, obscured by the shadows.

He backed up and hit a wall, Tommy belatedly realized he had wandered farther into the alleyway than he had intended.

“Uh- hello?” Tommy said, wincing when his voice echoed shakily through the alley. “I- I’ll beat the shit out of you, watch yourself!” He bluffed, holding his fists up.

The figure stepped forward, the mask on his face came into view when the faint light hit it. Comedy.

The looming villain just stood there for a moment. Whoever said people only ever had a flight or fight with fear was wrong because Tommy was sure there was another; freeze. Tommy stayed completely still, eyes blown wide. “Not with that stance,” the villain said with a slight laugh. “Here.”

Comedy stepped forward until he was right in front of him, he grabbed Tommy’s wrists very gently and moved them up more. Tommy allowed the action out of pure shock and confusion.

Comedy took a small step back and put both hands on his shoulders, making him stand up straighter. “Feet farther apart,” he huffed, Tommy obeyed without a second thought. “Put your left foot forward a little.”

Tommy did, staring at the villain with wide, scared eyes. Comedy stepped back and looked at him for another moment before nodding in approval. Then he paused.

“Oh uh, you- you’re shakin’ is that... are you cold?” Comedy asked dumbly, scratching the back of his neck.

*That* pulled Tommy out of his stupor. “Wha- no! Yes? Fuck you!”

Comedy blinked, looking around awkwardly as if searching for something.

Another person jumped down and Comedy’s shoulders slumped a little. Tragedy had his arms crossed, looking mildly annoyed as he looked between the two.

“You’re scaring him, dumbass!” Tragedy scoffed, slowly approaching Tommy with his hands out, like he was a wild animal. Like how Tommy tried to coax the cat toward him earlier.

“Hey... kid. We aren’t here to hurt you.”

“I’m not a fuckin’ kid, prick!” Tommy hissed, utterly insulted by the accusation.

“Right,” Tragedy said, dropping his hands. “Well, we mean no harm anyway. Comedy’s just socially challenged.”

“Hey!”

“But, I came to... say thank you. For saving my life,” he continued, ignoring Comedy’s interjection. “I owe you.”

Tommy’s face scrunched up. “Oh piss off. I don’t want your fuckin’ favor,” he huffed, lowering his fists to idly sit curled around his messenger bag, not only so he didn’t look like an idiot but also in case he had to run. “I don’t want to get mixed up in your bullshit.”

Tragedy tilted his head at him, the action so familiar he just couldn’t place it. “Why *did* you save me?”

Tommy frowned, his eyes looking away from where Tragedy’s were, but he always kept the villains in view.

“You could’ve left me there. Why didn’t you?”

There was a long pause and Tommy felt two pairs of eyes on him, documenting his every twitch and shift. “Cause- because I’m not a heartless piece of shit?” Tommy said, a lot of attitude in his words that left the *‘like you’* unsaid.

Tragedy didn’t seem offended, but he did look hurt, taking another step back with a gloved hand hovering over his heart. The sight almost made Tommy feel bad.

He hiked his messenger bag up higher on his shoulder, his legs tense and ready to run. He knew, in reality, it wouldn’t make a difference, but it still made him feel better.

“Look, I didn’t really want to involve you in this either, but it seems you already are,” Tragedy said with a sigh, a hand rubbing at his temples like it would help make his brain work faster.

“What do you mean?” Tommy questioned nervously, glancing between the two villains.

“I mean heroes have you under surveillance. Did you not see the black SUV sitting across from your house, tinted windows and all?”

“You... you know where I live,” Tommy said, it wasn’t a question. Tragedy grimaced while Comedy crossed his arms, looking at the other villain expectantly like he too, was awaiting his explanation.

“Yeah, it- we just wanted to check in on you, just in case. Because you saved me, it was the least I could do and it turns out they *are* watching you.”

Tommy said nothing, eyes darting around anxiously. He was sure if he said anything his fear would be obvious with the way his lungs were buzzing and his hands and legs were trembling.

Tragedy looked at him for a long moment, the frown on his mask fitting well as his head lowered guiltily. “Look I-“

Suddenly Tragedy’s head shot up and he cut himself off, Comedy tensed as well, grabbing Tragedy’s forearm. Tragedy whipped out two large machete-like weapons, the ends curved into a sharp hookish point. Tommy noticed that Comedy also retrieved the sword from his belt and let go of Tragedy’s arm. The two looked around the alleyway, turning their backs to each other with practiced ease.

It was clear they sensed something he did not. Seeing the villain’s reaction to whatever was now in their presence, Tommy’s fear rose and he backed up further, his back hitting a wall.

For a long, unsettling few moments, he heard nothing. Tommy was tempted to just run while the two villains were distracted by something that wasn’t there.

Until something felt *off*.

He didn’t know when he looked away, but when he lifted his head he saw several lime green figures circling the two villains as another sneakily jumped out of the shadows, the air shifting strangely around them all.

Tommy only realized who he was looking at when he caught the smiley faces on each of the figures. *Mirage*. He couldn’t withhold the gasp that escaped him, a hand coming up to slap over his mouth.

It was far too late to cover the noise and Tommy’s stomach dropped when over a dozen eyes turned to him at the same time. The villains surrounded in the middle looked between him and the figures nervously, hands tightening on their weapons.

All at once, the alleyway ground turned into a pattern of bright colors, the trash and dumpsters flicking into weird shapes with random colors, suddenly lacking shadows.

It was like he had jumped into a child’s drawing, the sky a bright, monotonous blue.

He blinked and realized he hadn't been attacked yet and stumbled over his feet to back out the way he came, noticing the villains had taken Mirage's moment of confusion to lunge into a fight.

A bone-chilling spike of fear rose in him when he heard the sound of Mirage's uncontrollable laughter, something he had heard on the news before briefly when it was showing clips of his and Comedy's fights.

Tommy held tightly onto his bag, weaving through the strange shapes on the ground that were somehow moving and growing in size. He stared at one particular one that grew and jumped around it, only to slam face-first into a wall that wasn't there.

Reality and the illusion flickered as he fell backward on his ass *hard*. For a split second, he swore he saw the flash of a concrete wall in front of him. A flare of anger surged through his burning muscles as he pushed himself up on his elbows, wincing as his head protested the action.

He stayed there for a second, blinking while he tried to figure out where he was so he could escape. Hissing in pain he caught sight of all the scrapes and bruises on his arms simply from his failing escape attempt.

There was a noise nearby he couldn't decipher and Tommy flinched when arms snaked under his armpits and lifted him to his feet. Only, the hands on him weren't there, it was just the bright blue sky and lime green ground that he guessed was supposed to be like grass. He knew all these things weren't actually real, that someone was there dragging him someplace and he didn't know where to, but his mind was confused and it *hurt* to think about.

Tommy squeezed his eyes shut and opened them, thrusting his hands forward and trying to push away from whoever was pulling him along. He eventually landed a punch, and he knew he did because the hands retracted. Of course, that didn't help Tommy for long because now no one was keeping him balanced.

He landed on his ass *again* and the hands were back, this time one landed gently on his chest above his heart and the other was firmly holding him in place by the shoulder.

Suddenly, emotions that were not his own flooded in and flushed out the utter *terror* overtaking him.

He opened his eyes again and was met with the jarringly out-of-place sight of Tragedy, contrasting harshly with the flashy colors all around them.

Tommy belatedly realized that Tragedy was talking to him, and slowly, his hearing returned. "-need to breathe. Hey- can you see me yet?"

He nodded, wincing as it stung and made him feel his pulse thumping through his head.

"There you go," Tragedy whispered encouragingly, glancing over his shoulder. Tommy looked around and realized the colors were dulling and things were starting to look normal.

They seemed to be hiding behind a dumpster with Tommy leaned up against the alley wall. “You’re going to be okay, alright? I’m gonna get you out of here.”

Tommy found himself nodding despite how scared he was of *him* just a few minutes prior. But something about humanity was that people knew when to put their differences aside to combat a bigger evil; which ironically happened to be a hero. A hero who apparently gave zero shits about his innocence in the situation, taking to affect him with his freaky power too.

As Tragedy stood and held out his hand to take, Tommy wondered if maybe he was wrong. That maybe because he had a bias against heroes, he suddenly thought villains were the lesser of the two evils.

Tommy internally scoffed at the thought and took Tragedy’s hand without more hesitation. He wanted to get the fuck out of there, not have a moral dilemma.

Tragedy pulled him up and Tommy began to hear more of the fighting and shouting in the distance. The villain kept ahold of his hand and started off in a sprint, tugging Tommy along just a couple feet behind.

While Tragedy weaved through the alleyway’s intersections and buildings with ease, Tommy marveled at the two massive swords on his back. They each had dark, dull blue hilts that had a green emerald embedded in each of the guards. The blades were concealed in similarly colored blue sheaths, but he knew underneath were sharp, curved blades that sparked when clashing against heroes’ weapons.

He was distracted when they rounded a corner and came to a screeching halt, Tommy was so close he ran into Tragedy’s back. He instinctively peered around the man rather than over his shoulder, mostly because he was too tall, but also to hide behind him.

Standing in front of them was Mirage, he was off to the side holding a giant sword in his hand. Tommy recognized the sword was big enough to have created the massive wound he healed on Tragedy not too long ago.

But Tragedy didn’t falter. He simply whipped his hands up and yanked the blades out of the sheath on his back with a satisfying *shink*, flipping them in his hands and poisoning them at the hero.

When none of them moved, Mirage turned his head slightly and spotted him.

Then, three more Mirages appeared, all in the same stance.

Tommy’s eyes widened as he realized he knew which was the real one and Tragedy didn’t. He hid behind the villain further as Mirage and his illusions started walking closer, causing the two to back up.

“Back left,” Tommy whispered, so quietly he was almost worried Tragedy wouldn’t hear him and he would have to repeat it.

Except, Tragedy did because he immediately launched into action, slashing out at Mirage who was surprised, his illusions dissipating like they were never there. Probably because they weren't.

Tommy just backed up as the two fought, watching as Tragedy angrily tore away one of his weapons away from Mirage's sword, raising it and swinging down the hero's leg. It collided with part of the hero's armor pads before it slid and hit an unprotected part of his knee.

Mirage didn't react but he had obviously been hurt judging by the blood on Tragedy's blade.

While the hero was recovering his stance, Tragedy turned his head to Tommy, jerking his head toward the exit of the alleyway. Tommy got the message and nodded, running for it.

His heart was beating out of his chest, his vision pulsing along with it. Tommy could only distantly hear the sound of his shoes slapping against the ground, adrenaline flushing through his body.

Tommy kept running until he grew too tired to, the residual exhaustion from work weighing down on him. He was still shaking, breathing heavily as he patted his pockets and realized his phone was in his bag. He cursed under his breath and began looking around for anything to be open.

It was early in the morning, so he wasn't surprised when he saw the lights off and the doors locked everywhere he looked. Most places wouldn't open for hours.

Tommy kept walking, the cold air causing his lungs to tighten now that his body wasn't producing extra heat with the energy being used.

He breathed a sigh of relief when he saw a gas station was open. He didn't recognize it, so he must've strayed farther than his usual path.

The sign on the front was flickering a dull pink, '*OPEN 24/7*' it read.

The place was grimy, cigarette butts and drops of oil were scattered everywhere in the little parking lot area. The windows were littered with advertisements, so much so he could barely see inside the building itself. Trash bags and plastic cups flew across the ground with the cold breeze, sticking out of the sewer drain.

Tommy scrunched his nose up as he was assaulted with the strong smell of gasoline and garbage.

He ignored the atmosphere as best as he could, shoving the door to the gas station open, alerting his presence with a distorted ding. Thankfully, the horrible smell stayed mostly outside, only stale air residing in the small building.

Tommy's eyes immediately latched onto the man at the counter who seemed completely bored out of his mind. He was leaning back in an old wooden chair with his feet kicked up on the counter, heavy boots on that Tommy internally dubbed 'skull stompers'.

The man himself was wearing dark clothing, a black bomber jacket on over a maroon hoodie. There was a black baseball cap over his black hair, covering his eyes as he looked down at his phone, idly scrolling.

Tommy approached the counter with tentative steps, his heart still trying to calm down as his adrenaline crashed.

The man didn't look up at him once as he took a drag of a cigarette that he was holding precariously in his other hand. Tommy noted he didn't see a lighter or box of matches anywhere nearby.

Tommy stood there awkwardly for a moment before clearing his throat, clasping his hands together to resist leaning on the dirty counter for support.

The man lazily looked up at him and froze, taking in a long breath. They both stayed silent for a moment as the man just stared at him, brown eyes taking in his disheveled appearance.

"Uhm, can I borrow your phone for a second? I need to make a call," Tommy asked, voice uncharacteristically quiet and sheepish.

The man blinked out of his stupor and nodded, fumbling with his phone before holding it out to him. "Yeah, just uh, be quick."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed and he withheld a nervous laugh at the fact no one was awake at this hour, so there would be no reason for the man to need him to hurry with his call. "Right," he said instead, tapping the phone app and going straight to the keypad.

Then, he hesitated. Who was he going to even call?

He could call Tubbo, but he didn't have a car so there wouldn't be any point. He could call Niki, but she was still at work.

Then, Tommy was reminded of the conversation he had with Wilbur.

*"I mean it, Tommy. If you think for even a second you might not be safe, don't hesitate to call me. Any hour, I don't mind."*

Tommy took in a deep breath and exhaled, he needed a ride home, he couldn't worry about waking Wilbur up when he knew the man would understand.

He typed in his number without any more hesitation, his hands still trembling from the adrenaline crash and fear. He squeezed his eyes shut and hit dial, feeling the man's eyes on him as he raised it to his ear.

The phone rang and rang and rang. He waited nervously as the sound pierced his ears and stopped again. *Rinnnnng* . Pause. *Rinnnnng* . Pause.



Then finally, there was a longer pause followed by a click, and a familiar voice cut through to him. *“Hello, you have reached Wilbur Craft- well, not really since I didn’t pick up so... leave a message after the beep!... Beep,”* Tommy inhaled, not quite ready to say something when Wilbur’s voice returned. *“Hah! I totally got you, that was just me. Okay okay, for real this time.”*

Tommy scowled at the tile floor and then heard the real beep, which now that he thought about it sounded nothing like Wilbur’s poor impression of it. Instead of leaving a voicemail he pressed the red button and dialed his number again with a spiteful frown. He wouldn’t have if that bastard didn’t fake him out with the voicemail beep.

*Rinnnnng* . Tommy glanced up at the man behind the counter who was looking at him with a frown that he quickly replaced with an amused smirk when he noticed Tommy’s gaze.

*Rinnnnng*. Tommy shifted on his feet, fidgeting with the end of his sleeve.

*Rinnnnng*. A car passed the gas station, driving so fast Tommy was sure the sound barrier was about to break.

*Rinnnnng*. Tommy’s anxiety spiked further as he started to regret it. Wilbur was probably trying to sleep, he has work in the morning, he’ll want a good night’s rest. He should just walk home, he was overreacting anyway. It wasn’t that big of a deal. He was scared for no reason.

*Rinnnnng. Pause. Click. “Hello, you have reached Wilbur-“*

Tommy tore the phone away from his ear and hit the end button, staring at the keypad in frustration.

The man’s eyes on him began to burn holes into his skull, he resisted the urge to turn and glare at him. Instead, he just typed in Tubbo’s number anyway and hoped for the best.

*Rinnnnng*.

*Rinnnnng*.

*Rinnnnng*.

*Rinnnnng*.

*Rinnnnng. Pause. Shuffling. “Hey, it’s Tubbo Underscore. Sorry, I didn’t answer your call, but it’s probably because I’m busy. Leave a message if you want.”*

Tommy stared at the phone as it beeped, he said nothing and deleted the voicemail.

He stood there for a moment, feeling the uncomfortable embarrassment heating up the back of his neck. Tommy pointedly avoided the man’s eyes and typed in one last number he knew in a ditch attempt at getting a safe ride home.

*Rinnnnng. Rinnnnng. Rinnn- “Hello?”*

Tommy took in a rather dramatic sigh of relief, all the fear leaving his body at once. “*Ranboo,*” he breathed, running a hand through his hair as he started pacing. The man behind the counter straightened up, obviously trying to pretend he wasn’t eavesdropping.

“*Tommy?*” Ranboo asked, his voice sleep-ridden and confused. “*Why are you calling so early- wait. Whose number are you calling from?*”

“Ranboo, I- I need a ride home,” Tommy said, focusing hard to keep his voice from shaking.

“*Why? What’s wrong? Are you okay?*” He questioned urgently, the sound of fabric shuffling came from the other side and Tommy knew he was going to be okay.

He swallowed the lump in his throat and answered quietly. “I just got a little spooked coming home from my shift is all. Don’t really feel safe walkin’ home.”

“*Okay, just tell me where you are and I’ll pick you up.*”

Tommy looked around and spotted the name of the gas station above the man’s head. “I’m at the twenty-four-hour Pit Stop.”

There was a long beat of silence as Ranboo was moving on the other end, the sounds of doors opening and closing. “*Why are you at the gas station four blocks off-route from the hospital to your house?*”

Tommy’s eyebrows downturned and he cursed Ranboo’s memory. Some things he remembered *very* well, things that no one else could recall the details of. While other times, he completely blanked, forgetting things that happened just days before. Having complete blackout times where he went about his day and just forgot everything about it. “I told you, I got spooked.”

“*Spooked? What are you, a horse? Come on Tommy, what happened?*”

Tommy spared a glance at the man behind the counter and deemed it fine enough to just tell Ranboo. “Fine,” he huffed, stopping his pacing to look out the front windows. “Walking home I got caught in the middle of a villain fight. Scary shit. Happy?”

A long pause came from Ranboo’s end again, but he knew he was there because he heard a car door slam shut. “*Not particularly,*” he deadpanned, the sounds of his car starting up rumbled through the speakers. “*I’ll be there in a few minutes, just hang tight.*”

“Wasn’t planning on goin’ anywhere,” Tommy mumbled, finger already hovering over the end call button.

“*Seeya in a few, Tommy.*”

Ranboo ended the call and Tommy was left feeling mildly annoyed and strangely disappointed. The two people he trusted the most weren’t there when he needed them, so he was stuck with Ranboo, the prick.

He and Ranboo were never super close, but he'd known him as long as Tubbo did. They just never really got to talking one on one, Tommy was always busy and Ranboo was too anxious to try and butt in to make plans.

Tommy felt guilty about it, but he never felt motivated enough to put effort into interacting with people or making friends. Especially around the time he met Ranboo. *Which was also the time when every day he would go down to the-*

"Are you gonna give me my phone back or just stare at it?" A voice yanked him out of his thoughts, making him whip his head around at the man behind the counter.

He withheld his pent-up irritation and handed the man his phone back, taking a few steps away and glancing between him and the window awkwardly. Tommy failed to notice the pitying, almost *guilty* frown on his face.

"You okay, kid?" The man asked, leaning forward and studying Tommy's face.

He was too exhausted to care that he called him a kid, so he just shrugged. After a moment of silence, the man sighed and leaned back again.

"Wanna talk about it?"

"No, I'm fine," he said, pursing his lips and staring out the window. "Thanks though," he added after thinking about how rude he sounded, walking away to stand closer to the door.

The man didn't reply and just stared at him for a few seconds before shaking his head and taking another drag of his cigarette.

Tommy just bit the inside of his cheek, overthinking everything.

...

Eventually, Ranboo's car pulled up. It was an old thing, small with a dulling black paint job. Tommy didn't know the make or model, he wasn't one of those nerds that have a social media account for their car or know every brand on the streets. But the car was shit and that was about all he knew.

Tommy nodded politely to the man behind the counter before walking out the door, shivering at the cold and returning stench.

He made his way over and yanked on the handle of Ranboo's passenger door. It didn't open and he huffed when he saw Ranboo smirking at him through the window.

He hit his fist lightly against it, just hard enough to make a noise. The doors unlocked with a resounding click and he flung the door open.

Tommy flopped down into the passenger seat, shooting Ranboo a glare as he slammed the door shut.

It was quiet for a moment while Ranboo put the car in drive and exited the parking lot.

“Do you want to tell me what happened?”

Frowning, Tommy crossed his arms. “I told you what happened.”

Ranboo scoffed, adjusting his grip on the steering wheel, body tense. “You know what I mean, Tommy.”

He just stared at the dashboard in front of him, curling his fingers in his sleeves. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Okay,” Ranboo relented, sighing deeply.

The rest of the ride to Tommy’s house was spent in complete silence, save for the clicking of Ranboo’s turn signals and the hum of the car.

~ + ~

Dream dumped alcohol on his leg, pursing his lips at the burning that came from it. He wrapped his wound with gauze and tied it securely, huffing.

“Sapnap!” He called, standing up and walking over to the big window in front of him.

A shuffling came from the room next to his and his eyebrows furrowed. Picking up the glass of water on a small table, he took a sip and stared out over the vast city from dozens of stories off the ground.

The door to his room opened and he didn’t turn to look who it was before they spoke. “What?” George asked, irritable as always.

“I called for Sapnap,” Dream said, turning around and setting the glass down nearby.

George was frowning at him from the door, pronounced bags under his tired eyes. “He’s at his shift at the gas station, you know this.”

Dream rolled his eyes, shaking his head. “I told him to quit.”

It was quiet for a second before George responded, somehow managing to sound more annoyed. “Well, we have to uphold civilian identities, and he doesn’t have to listen to you.”

“Whatever, George,” Dream sighed, running a hand through his hair. “I’ll just tell you then,” he paused, staring out at the lights of the city as lampposts went out and the sun rose. “There’s a rogue healer.”

George shifted on his feet, walking further in, closing the door behind him. “I’m sure there’s always a rogue healer. I know there’s some that heal for the poor for free.”

“No, I mean someone is healing *villains* .”

The silence that came after was deafening, stretching out in a tense silence. It was never good for villains to have access to easy healing, it made it more difficult for heroes to keep up and kill or arrest them. “How do you know?”

“Tragedy is alive. In perfect condition, actually. Gave me this to show for it,” he leaned down and rolled up his pant leg, revealing his bandaged calf and knee, blood already peeking back through.

“That *has* to need stitches-“ he tried, though he was promptly cut off by Dream’s rant.

“George, I *killed* him. Tragedy should be dead and he’s *not* .”

George stared at him, and Dream stared back.

“My sword went *through* him and twisted when it came back out. His heart still beating is the work of a healer.”

“Are you sure he-“

“I PUT A GAPING HOLE THROUGH HIS CHEST, GEORGE!” He shouted, lashing out and throwing his hands up. “There’s no way he could’ve survived that! No possible way!”

George’s mouth clicked shut.

“Don’t you get it?! Someone is unaccounted for. There’s *someone* with healing powers *healing villains*. This fucks up my whole process! I put a villain on the brink of death and they slither away so this rogue healer can bring them back to full health. That means I wasted valuable time and energy for no reason.”

Shifting awkwardly on his feet, George sighed. “Dream, it’s not as big of a deal as you’re making it out to be. I-”

“*Really* ?” Dream scoffed, shaking his head. “*Is it* now? I’m trying to keep this city safe and this healer isn’t making it *any* easier! So of course you wouldn’t care, you half-ass every job you do!”

“Stop yelling and just *listen* to me!” George stressed, shaking his hands in frustration.

“Taking your anger out on me isn’t going to find the rogue!”

“*I’m* not yelling, *you’re* yelling! You’re minimizing *my* concerns!”

“I’m not minimizing anything! You’re just freaking out over an easy fix, clouding your judgment with anger!”

“I am *not* angry,” Dream hissed, hands curling into fists.

George rolled his eyes, laughing in disbelief. “Are you hearing yourself? You- you are *unbelievable* ! Just be *reasonable* !”

“I am being *plenty* reasonable! You’re not even trying to help with a solution, you’re just degrading me!”

“I *have* a solution, you just wouldn’t stop shouting!”

It was quiet for a long moment as Dream’s shoulders slumped a little. “Okay then, what’s your solution?”

“I think we start around where he escaped to. The person who healed him has to be registered, so we’ll figure it out eventually.”

Dream nodded slowly, not really wanting to fight anymore. “Alright, we’ll do that.”

Another awkward moment of silence overtook them before George just sighed, long and drawn out, and left Dream’s room.

Dream sat back down on his bed, pointedly not looking at the blood trail he made from walking in. He perched his chin on his hands and stared out the window, eyebrows furrowed.

*“Fuck.”*

## Chapter End Notes

plotplotplot

BTW OBVIOUSLY THE REASON WILBUR DIDN'T PICK UP WAS BC HE WAS BUSY FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE SO I BETTER NOT SEE ANYONE BASHING HIM IN THE COMMENTS >:( /lh

last chapter was kind of the end of arc 1 which i like to call "the bonding arc", even tho of course there is still more bonding and sweet moments to be had, it's just relationships are more set up for some of the scenes and plotpoints i want to hit next.

so here we are in the mysterious arc 2, introducing our beloved and beloathed antagonist; dream :) (+ MORE INSIGHT ON HIS POWER >:))

and comment if you want! i love reading them :D

# where were you?

## Chapter Summary


“Tubs?” He called out, hating the eerie silence of the place. He froze when he heard a groan coming from the bathroom. “Tubbo?”

Tommy rushed down the hall and pressed his hand against the door, finding it ajar. He pushed it open further to reveal Tubbo passed out, leaned up against the wall across from the open toilet, a hand on his stomach. All the previous annoyance in his body was flushed out with worry.

“Shit- Tubbo!”

## Chapter Notes

// illness, vomiting (mentioned)

sry i've been kinda busy guys, so took a lil bit to get this one out lmao  
and yall were wondering where tubbo was during all that... well... heheheh 

chapter title is a lyric from [You Found Me by The Fray](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Tommy got home he was understandably a little pissed. His hair was a mess from running in the wind and his eyes were bloodshot and tired. His entire body felt exhausted but his spite was stronger.

The sun was barely peeking over the horizon, Tommy didn't know how long he had been running or how long it really took for Ranboo to pick him up and bring him home. All he knew was that it was way later than he normally got home and he didn't know how to feel about that.

He reluctantly gave Ranboo an appreciative wave after he had dropped him off, waiting until he got to the front door to drive away.

Tommy patted his pockets, annoyed when he realized his keys were in his messenger bag. Where it was, he didn't know. He likely lost it somewhere in the alleyways, and frankly, Tommy never wanted to go back there. So he deemed it gone forever.

Tommy sighed and set foot on the grass, walking over to the nearest window where a window box full of petunias and ivy Tubbo had planted was.

He carefully stuck his hand in the box and plucked a spare key off the top of the dirt. Swiping a small speck of soil off it, he walked back over to the door.

Unlocking the door and going inside was a mindless process for him, usually after he would shed his jacket and bag, take a shower, and go to bed to regain the sleep he missed out on.

But this time was different, there was a ripple in his routine and it was strange to overcome.

He took off his jacket and paused, sniffing it and getting a whiff of garbage and cigarette smoke. Tommy noted Tubbo's coat was hung up and his boots were sitting by the door.

Tommy scrunched up his nose and made his way over to the laundry room, tossing his jacket into the washing machine. He looked down at his scrubs and pursed his lips, considerate.

A piercing ringing made him jump, his heart rate spiked and he gasped at the sound of a phone alarm.

Eyebrows furrowed, he followed the sound to the kitchen, where he found Tubbo's phone ringing, buzzing on the edge of the counter. He quickly turned the alarm off, noting it was Tubbo's 'wake up alarm', thinking about how weird it was to see it in the kitchen so far from his room.

A hint of worry seeped into his veins as he looked and noticed a missed call from an unknown number, realizing the reason Tubbo didn't pick up was simply because his phone was nowhere near him.

It was unusual for Tubbo to be without his phone for very long, especially since he was supposed to be sleeping and using it as an alarm clock.

Tommy picked it up and glanced around before going upstairs, looking for any sign of Tubbo.

"Tubs?" He called out, hating the eerie silence of the place. He froze when he heard a groan coming from the bathroom. "Tubbo?"

Tommy rushed down the hall and pressed his hand against the door, finding it ajar. He pushed it open further to reveal Tubbo passed out, leaned up against the wall across from the open toilet, a hand on his stomach. All the previous annoyance in his body was flushed out with worry.

"Shit- Tubbo!" Tommy hurried in, putting Tubbo's phone on the counter and kneeling down next to him. He pressed two fingers on his neck and held his breath as he felt for Tubbo's pulse.

He sighed in relief when he felt his heart beating under his fingers, faster than usual.

"Tubbo? Wake up, Tubbo," he said, lightly poking his shoulder.



Tubbo just groaned again in response, head lulling to the side to face Tommy. Tubbo's face was pale, a sickly color, dark shadows under his eyes that made him look ghostly. Tommy pressed the back of his hand to Tubbo's forehead, wincing at the heat radiating off him.

"Tubbo, come on. Wake up."

Finally, the boy cracked his eyes open and they widened when they focused on Tommy. He bolted up, swaying at the speed of it as he took in his surroundings again. He quickly leaned forward and gripped the toilet seat, pursing his lips and grimacing in pain.

"Where's the pain coming from?" Tommy asked, scooting closer and catching the smell of vomit.

Tubbo just pointed to his abdomen, clearly not trusting himself not to throw up again once he opened his mouth to speak.

"Okay," Tommy said, absentmindedly checking Tubbo's temperature again, racking his brain for a solution. His power couldn't heal illnesses, only open wounds. There were some people who could heal illnesses and they were highly sought after, he happened to know a few but he could tell Tubbo's problem was a fairly quick fix. One that demanded at least a few days of rest that Tubbo needed anyway. "I think you have food poisoning," he told him, standing up. "I'll be right back."

Tommy quickly took off down the stairs, rushing into the kitchen toward the medicine cabinet. It was also where they kept all their vitamins that he insisted Tubbo took along with all the kinds of pills Tommy could ever imagine them needing. He scanned over everything and grabbed the bottle of Tylenol and thermometer and closed the cabinet.

He opened another cabinet and took out a cup, quickly moving over to the fridge. He began filling it with water from the freezer door and opened the other fridge door, eyes darting around until they landed on a pink bottle of Pepto-Bismol.

Tommy carried the medicine awkwardly in the crook of his elbow while he focused on not spilling the water, the thermometer precariously pinched between his fingers. He bounded up the stairs and stopped at the hall closet. He opened it with his half-free hand and took out a small towel.

He gave up on trying to close the door after realizing it would be harder to close with how the carpet was around it, making his way back into the bathroom.

Tubbo blinked up at him, frowning and shaking his head, a guilty look on his face. "Tommy, 'm fine. Go t' sleep," he mumbled, trying and failing to wave him off as Tommy set his supplies down on the counter.

"You're not fine in the slightest actually," Tommy said, taking the thermometer out of its case and turning to Tubbo. "Open."

Tubbo rolled his eyes and grabbed the thermometer out of Tommy's hands, pressing the little red button on it, causing a loud beep to come from it. He stared at it for a second as it

processed before putting it in his mouth and scowling at Tommy.

Tommy ignored his clear disapproval and shook the bottle of Pepto-Bismol before pouring it into the small measured cup it came with.

The thermometer beeped and Tommy looked over at Tubbo expectantly, the boy frowned at the device and reluctantly turned it around to face Tommy. ‘ 102.3 ’ it read, making him frown as well. “Definitely food poisoning,” he muttered, grabbing the towel and wetting it under the sink with cold water.

“Tommy, you’ve been up for-“

“Tubbo, let me take care of you for once,” Tommy huffed, voice soft in sympathy. “I’ll be fine without sleep for a little while longer.”

Tubbo pursed his lips again and slumped a little, hair sticking to his sweaty forehead.

“Here, drink some of this and see if you’ll be able to keep down a Tylenol, okay?” He said, holding the cup out for him.

Tubbo raised his hand and Tommy belatedly noticed it was shaking, goosebumps running up and down his arms.

Tubbo’s warm hand grasped onto the cup and Tommy helped him bring it up to his mouth to drink. “How long have you been in here?”

Tubbo shrugged, taking a few small sips of the water and shuddering. He handed the water back and Tommy reluctantly took it back, placing it on the counter as close to Tubbo as possible. “I dunno, for a while I guess.”

“Do you know what you might’ve eaten last night to cause this?”

Tubbo’s eyebrows furrowed, a fog in his gaze that was obviously making it harder for him to think as fast as he usually did. “M never eating gas station hot dogs again,” he declared, gagging slightly at the thought.

Tommy scrunched his nose up sympathetically. He wasn’t about to drill Tubbo further and ask why he didn’t just eat at home, Tommy knew it was probably because he was studying late somewhere and got hungry on the way back. So he just nodded and rang the towel out after deeming it cool enough.

He knelt down and placed it on the back of Tubbo’s neck, brushing his recently shaggy hair out of the way.

“Think you can keep some Pepto-Bismol and Tylenol down?”

Tubbo nodded appreciatively, his shaking from the fever worsening.

Tommy popped open the bottle of Tylenol with ease and shook two pills into his palm, dumping them into Tubbo’s awaiting hand.

Popping them into his mouth, Tubbo grabbed for the cup of water which Tommy helped him with again and the boy realized he was still too weak to hold it up himself.

After taking the pills, Tommy quickly had him drink the Pepto-Bismol.

Tommy took the moment while Tubbo was determining whether or not he could leave the bathroom to set a timer for six hours on Tubbo's phone, explaining that after six hours he could have another dose of Tylenol.

Tommy tried not to dwell on how he had been selfishly upset at Tubbo for not picking up his call. Not even expending the thought he could be in trouble too.

His attempts were not successful.

...

Once they hit the half-hour mark Tommy went ahead and gave Tubbo more Pepto-Bismol. They hadn't said much during the time being, mostly because Tubbo's headache was too bad to talk. But as he stared at Tommy he happened to come up with something to say.

"I've been meaning to ask... how did you get that gash on your forehead?"

Tommy stilled, shoulders raising defensively. He turned his head and looked at himself in the mirror, finding a giant bruise above his left eyebrow, a cut in the middle that had dried blood on it. "Tripped on the way home," he shrugged, not looking Tubbo in the eyes.

Tommy raised his hand up and pressed two fingers to the gash, it was gone within a few seconds. All that was left was the bruising, which was something Tommy was never able to master fixing.

Tubbo was frowning at him when he looked back, a disbelieving pinch to his face. Tommy was almost grateful Tubbo was too weak to shake the truth out of him.

A long moment of silence passed that made Tommy nervous, wishing he had just said nothing at all or deflected. Maybe he should've just told the truth. But the truth would be worse, wouldn't it?

Tubbo was the one to break the quiet atmosphere again and pull him from his thoughts. "I'm cold," he said, a whine to his voice that was unlike him.

"It's just the fever Tubs, you're still way warmer than you should be."

"But it's cold in here," he continued with a shiver, slowly moving his hands up to cross his arms. "And I'm tired."

Tommy's expression softened and he nodded lightly. "Okay, well we can fix that."

He leaned down and helped Tubbo to his feet, throwing an arm around his shoulders to hold him upright. Once Tubbo straightened up he hissed in a breath and hunched over, clutching his stomach.

“Do you think you need to stay? I can get you a bucket?”

Tubbo shook his head, closing his eyes to prevent the nausea from worsening. “‘urts.”

“I know,” Tommy said sympathetically, walking Tubbo down the hall to his room. He pushed the door open and was met with the sight of the sage green walls and the darker green accents. There were half-finished crochet projects everywhere, including a few bees and a hive. Tommy briefly remembered when Tubbo brought up making a bee army, that must’ve been the context.

He hadn’t really been in Tubbo’s room in a while, he had no reason to. But it didn’t seem much different, probably because Tubbo was still in it and made it like a home. The only reason Tommy’s room was homey at all was because Tubbo frequently barged in and put something in there or changed something, whether it be something he made or something he found and bought because it reminded him of Tommy.

Tommy led Tubbo over to his bed and helped him climb under the covers, trying to prevent himself from fretting too much and annoying Tubbo.

...Fuck that.

As soon as Tubbo was comfortable, Tommy took off down the stairs, finding their dubbed ‘puke bowl’ that they only used when they were sick. He made a point to grab more towels on the way back up to Tubbo’s room, pausing when he caught sight of the heating pad on the bottom shelf. He grabbed it and slung it over his shoulder.

He stopped in the bathroom again to wet all the small towels with cool water and rung them out, bringing the rest of them supplies he had left to Tubbo’s room as well.

He set the bowl on Tubbo’s bedside table and ignored how the boy groaned in disapproval, turning on his side and poorly concealing the fact he was doubled over in pain.

Tommy coaxed Tubbo into laying on his back again, plugging the heating pad in nearby and put it on his stomach. Tubbo messed with the settings while Tommy strategically placed cool towels on the front and back of Tubbo’s neck and on his forehead and cheeks.

Tubbo complained as he did, but Tommy paid him no mind and took the original cup of water to refill.

After bringing Tubbo his water and deemed him okay enough to be alone, Tommy called into work without another thought. He would take care of Tubbo just as Tubbo had taken care of him plenty of times before.

Sunday rolled around and Tommy hadn't left the house, he had been too busy hovering at Tubbo's side to notice the days slip by. He only missed two days of work before the weekend came, trying and failing to do everything Tubbo did.

The main thing was cooking, Tubbo was always perfect at it, never needing to take more than a few glances at a recipe book before he could nail it. While Tommy was stumbling around the kitchen like a newborn deer, looking for ingredients as something burned on the stove.

Tubbo's condition hadn't gotten much better, he was able to keep down more liquids and medicine but his fever was still relatively the same. He still shook and shuddered with every breath and he still laid curled in on himself all day. The sight made Tommy unreasonably unsettled, it was unusual to see Tubbo like that. Tubbo never got sick and when he did it barely lasted a day or two.

But now, Tommy was nervous.

...

He had just gotten done watering all of Tubbo's plants, which happened to be a lot more than he thought. Every window, every inch of the backyard it seemed, and everywhere there was empty shelf space there was a plant of some kind.

They were pretty and made the house all the more alive, but it was a ton of work. Tommy didn't know how Tubbo did it.

Tommy washed his hands in the bathroom sink and looked up, met with the sight of dull blue eyes and a mud smear on his face, and of course, a purple-yellow bruise on his forehead.

He frowned and wiped the mud off, he had no clue how it got there.

After he cleaned himself up, he went into the kitchen and looked through the cabinets for something to make Tubbo for lunch. It was a little before noon and he wanted to get a head start in case he messed it up and had to redo it.

The only thing Tommy had been able to successfully make was soup, and it was also the only thing Tubbo would eat and keep down, considering his sickness decreased his appetite.

As he searched the cabinets, his face dropped more every time. They were out of soup.

"Oh *fuck*," he hissed under his breath, already heading up the stairs to tell Tubbo of their predicament.

He knocked on the door and got a mumbled response which he perceived as a welcome.

"Hey Tubs, how are you feelin'?" He asked, walking up to his bedside and placing the back of his hand on his forehead.

"Like shit," Tubbo supplied, pursing his lips and twisting around uncomfortably in his bed.

Tommy's frown deepened and he adjusted the blankets absentmindedly, hating how helpless he felt. "I wanted to tell you I'm heading to the store, gonna take your bag. I uh- lost mine."

Tubbo just nodded, seemingly out of it still.

"Should I call Ranboo over?" Tommy pondered out loud, not liking the idea of leaving Tubbo home alone like he was.

Tubbo waved him off. "'M fine."

Tommy scoffed and walked over to Tubbo's bedside table, snatching up his phone and typing in his passcode.

"No- he- Ranboo will be busy!"

"I'm sure he would care more about you than whatever he's doing right now," Tommy said with a huff, scrolling through Tubbo's many contacts and finding Ranboo's name. He pressed call without another thought.

It rang once before he picked up.

*"Hey Tubbo, what's up?"*

"Not Tubbo, big man," Tommy smiled, ignoring Tubbo's glare.

*"Oh, what's up Tommy?"*

"Tubbo is real sick and he needs a babysitter while I'm off at the store. Are you available to come over for a bit?" He asked, taking a few steps away from Tubbo's bed to avoid getting hit.

*"He's sick? I- yeah I'll be right over,"* Ranboo said, concern filling his voice.

Tommy sighed and looked at Tubbo, grateful. "Thanks man."

*"Not a problem. Seeya Tommy."*

"Seeya."

Ranboo hung up and Tommy quelled the strange feeling in his gut, setting Tubbo's phone down and going straight back downstairs.

From there he collected Tubbo's backpack, green with various flower pins on it. He went through it and found Tubbo's wallet, he felt guilty but he would pay him back once he sorted out his situation with the bank.

...

After Tommy had decided what he needed from the store and made a mental list, there was a knock on the door.

He opened it and was unsurprised to see Ranboo standing there, towering over him. He nodded and let him in without a word, closing the door and guiding him up to Tubbo's room.

"He'll need to take another Tylenol in about," he paused, looking down at Tubbo's phone, "forty minutes."

"Alrighty," Ranboo said, sitting down in the chair next to Tubbo Tommy had been using before.

Tommy took in a slow inhale and nodded approvingly. "I'll be back soon."

...

When he got to the store it took a bit of looking around to find the soup aisle, a blue basket perched in the crook of his elbow. He didn't want to lug around one of the big heavy carts that took up a lot of space, so he had settled for a basket.

Though he quickly realized his mistake when he started stacking the heavy cans into his basket. The issue being; he was not as strong as he had originally thought.

He had gotten so much soup there was one can sitting precariously on top of the rest, overlooking the basket walls. It made him nervous but he ignored it and instead made his way over to the drink aisle.

Tommy searched the shelves before his eyes caught on various flavors of Gatorade. Tubbo would need the extra electrolytes. So he looked at the colors and eventually just decided to get one of each. Tommy has never really been picky about food and drinks but Tubbo always has. That's why it surprised him to hear he got sick over a *gas station* hot dog of all things.

Tommy realized the red Gatorade was on the bottom shelf which, for him, and unlike Tubbo, was hard to reach easily.

He bent down to grab one and winced when the can of soup on top slid off the basket and onto the floor, rolling away.

Tommy huffed and hurriedly crouch-ran over to it before it rolled under the aisle and went to the other side. His mission was quickly halted when some absolute idiot turned into the aisle and tripped over him.

"Shit- I'm so sorry I-" Tommy's words died in his throat. Wilbur was sitting on the floor in front of him, a flour smudge on his face, utterly in shock. "Wilbur? What are you doing here?"

Now, Tommy hadn't really been *avoiding* him, he was just too busy with Tubbo to go out and see him.

Though... maybe there was a little part of him disappointed that Wilbur didn't pick up his call for help.

“Tommy?” Wilbur said dumbly, shaking his head and getting to his feet, picking up the several bags of flour he dropped. “I was picking up some flour for Puffy- my boss, she ran out and she doesn’t get more in ‘till Wednesday.”

“Oh,” he mumbled, noticing now that Wilbur was still in his bakery apron. Wilbur’s eyes caught onto the bruise on his forehead and Tommy quickly ruffled his hair down further to cover it more.

There was a long moment of awkward silence and Tommy just slowly put the soup can back on top of the others in his basket, eyes going to the floor. “Tommy,” Wilbur started slowly, hesitant. “Are you... what are you doing here?”

Tommy pursed his lips and looked around, shrugging. “My roommate is sick.”

“Oh I’m sorry, I- uh,” it was quiet for another moment as Wilbur tried to gather his thoughts. Tommy shifted uncomfortably on his feet. “I thought- you haven’t been answering my texts and...” he trailed off.

Tommy shrugged. “I lost my bag a few days ago, had my phone in it,” even though it was kind of the truth, he couldn’t help but feel bad. He schooled a neutral expression on his face and crossed his arms.

Wilbur’s shoulders sagged a little bit, maybe in defeat before they tensed again. “Hey, Tommy?”

Tommy looked up at him and took in the man’s face, tired and anxious. The guilt tightened around his gut.

“Are you upset with me...?”

Tommy shook his head, averting his eyes again to look for an excuse to leave. He did not have a lie prepared for Wilbur yet, he wasn’t even expecting to see him until Tubbo was better.

“Are you sure? I’m sorry if I said something or-“

“No no, you didn’t do anything,” Tommy assured, the guilt worsened and Wilbur’s expression shifted into something more confused. In reality, it wasn’t Wilbur’s fault. Tommy called him way too early in the morning on a different number, he had no idea the call he didn’t answer was Tommy. Rationally, Tommy had no reason to be upset with him, but emotions were anything but rational. “Sorry, I’m just stressed.”

“Oh,” Wilbur said, nodding. “It’s alright I was just... overthinking, it doesn’t- it’s fine.”

Tommy frowned, looking down at his basket. He tried to conjure up something more believable, the truth maybe. “I really better be going, Tubbo’s waiting on me,” he blurted instead, hiking the basket up his arm further, taking a few steps back.

“Oh okay,” Wilbur blinked, a frown on his face as he turned a little and looked down the aisle of drinks. “I’ll... see you soon?”



Tommy paused and he nodded in a way that was almost unnoticeable. "Bye Wilbur."

Wilbur reluctantly waved as Tommy turned and speed-walked out of the aisle, trying to get out of there as fast as possible. He needed to get home to help Tubbo before he was forced to acknowledge the pain in his heart.

~ + ~

A few more days passed and Tubbo was positive he was perfectly fine. He had stopped vomiting and seemingly was rid of stomach aches. Tommy made him stay home for one more day before he was allowed to go back to work and school, just to be safe.

So when Wednesday night rolled around, Tommy had nothing to do other than go to work. He had no reason to stay home now that Tubbo was better, so he might as well make himself useful elsewhere.

Tommy was *extremely* nervous to walk to the hospital at night again. Tubbo had tried convincing him to call Ranboo to drive him, but he refused, saying he would be fine.

He was not fine.

Tommy hadn't been able to get in contact with his bank yet, and he didn't really need to have his phone. No one texted him but Wilbur anyway.

When Tubbo tried to get him to take his backpack so he could bring a homemade 'lunch', Tommy just refused with a shake of his head. He just told Tubbo he would find something in the hospital cafeteria, as bad as the food was.

He walked quicker than before, trying to get to the hospital as quickly as possible.

When he got to the same streetlight the now seemed to be a landmark for him, he didn't slow down before hurrying across the road.

Once he got to the other side he was overridden with a strange feeling, goosebumps rising on his arms. He slowed to a stop and whipped his head around, looking for the source.

"You really should look both ways when you cross the street," a familiar voice said from in front of him. He turned fast and froze in place again, eyes locking onto the villain who has caused him many problems since meeting.

Tragedy was casually leaning against a wall, concealed mostly by the awning of an unmarked building. His hands were in the pockets of his trench coat, something dangling from his arm by the crook of his elbow. "What do you want?" Tommy asked, willing his voice not to tremble.

Tragedy just shook his head, waving one of his hands in a dismissive motion. "Nothing."

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, staring into the dark eyes of Tragedy's mask. "Then why the hell are you following me?" He questioned, an accusing tone to his voice that made him wince at his idiocy.

Except, Tragedy didn't seem to mind, slowly pushing himself off the wall to walk into the light of the streetlamp. "Aren't you missing something?" He grabbed the strap of a bag off his forearm and held it out to him. Now that it was in the light, Tommy could clearly see it was his messenger bag.

Tommy's hand itched to grab it, but he hesitated. "This isn't some trick, is it?"

Tragedy sighed, scoffing and shaking his hand a little bit, encouraging him to take it. "No, it's not a trick. I'm not an asshole."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed, wary as he stepped forward and took his bag. After a moment he took a step back, eyes glued to Tragedy, who didn't move other than crossing his arms. Keeping Tragedy in his peripheral vision, he opened his bag and rifled through his things, making sure everything was accounted for.

He was surprised to see nothing had been touched, all in the same disarray as he had left it.

"Thank you," he said quietly, putting it over his shoulder and untensing slightly.

"Don't thank me, it's no problem at all," was all Tragedy said, uncrossing his arms and walking back toward the shadows of the alleyway. "Be safe."

Then he was gone.

Tommy continued on to work, confused and strangely grateful.

~ + ~

Tommy got into the hospital and did his usual routine of scanning in and clocking in. After that, he looked around and realized he couldn't find anyone. None of the nurses or doctors were rushing around like usual.

A shudder ran down his spine and he hurried into the breakroom, only to still once he entered.

All heads snapped to him and he tensed, noticing how all his coworkers seemed to be lined up according to their titles, anxious and scared.

Looking around the room from the doorway, he couldn't see anything that would make them all so nervous.

But he was quickly made aware when two large hands fell on his shoulders, spinning him around. “Dr. Tommy Metro, correct?”

He took in a sharp breath before nodding. “Yeah, that’s me.”

“Alright, why don’t you go join your coworkers at the front of the line?” Mirage said, though it wasn’t a suggestion, it was an order. “Then we can get started.”

## Chapter End Notes

yooo back with anotha one guys :)))

if you couldn't tell, i got a little carried away with the sick hurt/comfort type thing

lmaooo

but at least that answers the question of "where was tubbo >:(" i got a lot last chapter

hehe >:)

annndddd Ramadan Mubarak to all the muslim homies out there!! :D

# the quiet scares me 'cause it screams the truth

## Chapter Summary

“Dr. Tommy Metro,” he said in what Tommy assumed was another greeting. In case he was asking for confirmation, Tommy nodded a little. “Follow me.”

The only noise that resounded through the room and hallway was Mirage’s heavy booted footfalls along with Tommy’s soft ones. The lack of commotion in the hospital only added to his anxiety, because everyone knew. Everyone was listening, waiting.

## Chapter Notes

// panic attack

yoo whats up guys ! i left you all on that cliffhanger, didnt i? ehehehehe

chapter title is a lyric from [Sober by P!nk](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur didn’t know what he did wrong. Tommy had been ignoring his texts and it had made Wilbur anxious, only to find out that he just didn’t have his phone on him. So, of course, Wilbur went out and found his bag for him where his phone was, and returned it to him.

But, there was something off about his conversation with Tommy and it wasn’t just the fact that the entire time Tommy’s emotions were in a conflicted frenzy. He went between guilt, anger, and a flurry of other emotions while talking to Wilbur, which in turn confused Wilbur. He had no idea why Tommy would be upset with him, Wilbur. Tragedy, though, was understandable.

The wind whipped against his mask and he sighed, kicking his feet against the ledge of the building he was sitting on. He thought he would go back home right after he gave Tommy his bag back, but he found he was too stuck in his thoughts. So, like any sane person, he climbed up onto some random building and sat at the edge of the roof, dangling his legs over the side as he stared down at the fatal fall below.

A crow landed next to him and it tilted its head at him, trilling something only his father would ever be able to understand. Wilbur sighed softly, holding his hand out to the bird who dropped a shiny penny into his hand. A smile crept onto his face and he pet the head of the crow, pocketing the coin for safekeeping. His father liked to keep the gifts they brought.

“Thank you,” he whispered, grinning when the crow just hopped to the ledge and flew off.

Wilbur fidgeted with his hands in his lap, staring off into the distance. He didn’t know what to do.

~ + ~

Tommy was used to the sterile smell of the hospital and the white walls. He had practically grown up around it, shadowing doctors and getting field experience for a degree he didn’t want.

The smell, as he stood shoulder to shoulder with his coworkers like a mass execution, was nauseating. His heart was hammering in his chest, sweat collecting on the back of his neck. He was sure if they checked his vitals, they would deem him guilty on the spot.

Tommy just stared at the ground, avoiding looking up at the hero who had chased him and scared the life out of him just a week ago.

All he could think about was that night, wondering if Mirage had gotten a good look at his face, wondering if Mirage knew who he was and was just stalling, waiting for the perfect moment to announce his crime and drag him away.

His lungs ached, but he still held his breath, waiting for the man to start talking. To say something instead of staring at them all.

Tommy had seen plenty of people like him get taken away under the pretenses of a ‘traitor’ or a ‘rogue’. He hated knowing that it was going to be him soon, it had to be.

Tommy shifted on his feet as Mirage straightened up and started pacing in front of them, hands idly clasped behind his back. “Well, hello everyone. So sorry to interrupt your work night, though it is of utmost importance we get this figured out.”

Everyone shifted awkwardly on their feet, anxious tension filling the room.

“Here’s the rundown,” Mirage started, pausing in his pacing to turn to face them all. “A couple of weeks ago there was an instance where Tragedy, a notorious villain and *killer*,” he paused to let the word fill the air, “was injured in a fight with me. So it’s safe to say it’s a little suspicious when he turns up completely fine. Free of injuries, which could only be the work of a healer. A healer who we have deducted is from *this* very hospital.”

No one spoke, no one dared to breathe. The statement was clear, when Mirage was done there was going to be one less person working at the hospital, and it was going to be Tommy.

“So, if anyone would like to fess up and get this over with, it’d be highly appreciated,” he said, clapping his hands together in finality.

Tommy didn't move, a few others looked around at each other, trying to figure out who the rogue was. Tommy eventually shifted uncomfortably on his feet, glancing at Niki out of the corner of his eye, who was a few people down from him. Her stone-cold expression didn't give up how she was feeling, feigning annoyance. Though Tommy could tell she was scared, he knew her long enough to see the tells. How her eye twitched occasionally, how her legs and shoulders were tense, knees locked to keep them from buckling. It didn't provide Tommy any comfort.

When no one stepped forward, Mirage sighed, bowing his head in an exaggerated display of annoyance. His face was always covered with a white helmet-like mask that concealed his entire head, so he clearly wanted them to know how fed up he was.

Now that Tommy was so close, he could see where the dark fabric was different from the rest, allowing him to see through the black circles over his eyes. Then, contrasting with the seriousness of the mask was a crude drawing of a smile on his face. Apparently, it was something Comedy had done in a fight where he had managed to knock the hero out. No one knew why he did it, or why Mirage kept it like that. They only knew what they were told, Tommy supposed.

"None of you are leaving until I'm done here tonight, I hope you all know that," he said, standing up straighter as he began pacing again.

"There are- there are patients we have to attend to, it's-" he heard Niki start to say, though she was quickly silenced by a simple raise of Mirage's hand.

"Come in Hazard," Mirage shouted to the door. Everyone's heads turned at once as another hero walked in, anxious.

Arms stiffly at his sides, Hazard walked in, big heavy-duty boots knocking against the tile floor with every step. He was wearing his usual hazmat suit, though it had clearly been altered for hero practicality, armored pads and straps cinching in the loose plastic, as well as being a green color rather than yellow. He was also wearing his trademark gas mask, making an eerie whistling sound every time he breathed.

His hands were covered in black gloves, though they were different from the ones the other heroes wore. They were made of some kind of thick plastic, green pads on the fingertips.

He wasn't wearing or wielding a weapon, he didn't need it. He was the weapon.

Tommy took in a shallow breath as he stared at the hero's hands rather than his face. He knew a pair of tinted goggles would just stare back unblinkingly. With the addition of the hazmat hood pulled over the rest of his head, there was nothing definably human about him. It made him all the more creepy.

Hazard said nothing, even as Mirage gestured to the group of people, all lined up and close together. Tommy had noticed that it was everyone with a healing ability of some sort, mostly doctors and some nurses.

“Hazard here will be babysitting you all while I interview each of you, one by one,” Mirage announced, nodding to the other hero as he stepped forward. “First, I’ll start with the woman who seems so eager to leave. Come with me Dr. Nihachu.”

Niki looked around nervously and took a step out of the line, hands folded behind her back. Mirage waved her along, rather condescendingly, and guided her out of the room.

Everyone was left standing in silence, Hazard watching over them like a hawk. Like a warden overseeing his prisoners. It was terrifying.

Tommy interlocked his hands together in a desperate attempt to keep them from trembling, something that had been happening more often.

His breathing was rattled and his heart pounded so loudly in his ears, a part of him was worried everyone else could hear it, but he knew it didn’t work like that. Though it barely made him feel better.

The room was quiet as Hazard just stared at them all, unmoving.

It gave Tommy the opportunity to anxiously think about his situation. He just hoped Niki and Sally would hold his story, they were his only hope. Especially because he was the most suspicious, coming into work late that day and being on bedrest his entire shift.

He ran through every possible scenario in his head, and all of them ended in him being carried away, kicking and screaming like every other person like him. Because of course everyone was supposed to follow the rules, but especially people with powers like Tommy’s.

...

Tommy was snapped out of his trance when the person next to him in line got back from questioning. He hadn’t even noticed they had left.

Blinking, he felt a headache coming on from furrowing his eyebrows for so long. He almost jumped when a masked face stepped in front of him.

He felt the weight of everyone’s eyes on him as Mirage just stood in front of him, hands casually in the pockets of his pants.

“Dr. Tommy Metro,” he said in what Tommy assumed was another greeting. In case he was asking for confirmation, Tommy nodded a little. “Follow me.”

The only noise that resounded through the room and hallway was Mirage’s heavy booted footfalls along with Tommy’s soft ones. The lack of commotion in the hospital only added to his anxiety, because everyone knew. Everyone was listening, waiting.

He was brought to another nearby room, it was nothing special other than that Tommy didn’t frequent it. There was a table and two chairs in the middle of the room, everything else had been pushed to the walls, out of the way.

Mirage let him walk in first, stomping in closely behind. He gestured to the chair farthest from the door and Tommy hesitantly sat down, schooling his face into a neutral expression.

Mirage stayed standing, pacing around in front of him, seemingly deep in thought. Tommy was slightly confused, watching the man walk back and forth before he stopped and leaned forward and stared into Tommy's soul.

There was a clear glass of water in front of him, Tommy glanced over it before nervously meeting Mirage's 'eyes'.

The awkward stare down went on for another moment before Mirage stepped back and hummed, rolling his shoulders. Then, he walked to another small table and picked up the manilla folder on the top of the stack of files. He opened it and skimmed over the pages before sitting down in the chair and putting the manilla folder in front of him, closed.

"You were late today," Mirage stated, leaning back in his chair. Internally, he breathed a sigh of relief. He didn't recognize him.

Tommy didn't really know how to respond, so he just nodded.

"Is that a normal occurrence for you?"

Tommy swallowed down the lump in his throat, hoping that if he spoke softly enough his voice wouldn't break. "No, it's not. I just woke up a little later than usual," he lied, recalling the five alarms he always set to prevent that from happening.

Mirage hummed, accepting his answer. "It is interesting how you were late to work the night Tragedy was healed."

Tommy's blood ran cold and he held back a shudder, meeting Mirage's cold stare with even countenance. "I think I know what day you're on about," he said considerately, looking upward in thought before clarifying. "There was an emergency right as I got in, so I clocked in late."

Mirage stared at him, unblinkingly of course, for an uncomfortable amount of time before he shrugged, straightening up again. "Have you ever encountered Tragedy before?"

Tommy's heartbeat stuttered in his chest, once more he was thankful his vitals were not being monitored. "No, I've only ever seen him on the news."

"Are you sure?" Mirage challenged, planting his gloved hands on the edge of the table. "I mean, you *walk* to work late at night. Surely you've come across him. Or maybe one of his accomplices?"

Tommy held his breath as he remembered Comedy, correcting his fighting stance, oblivious to Tommy's fearful trembling. He also remembered Mirage chasing him down the dark alleyways at night. He decided it would be easier to tell a half-truth to sound more believable. "Nope. But, I have run into some vigilantes before."

At that, Mirage leaned forward more, intrigued. "Who?"



“Oh, Glitch and... Vertigo.”

“Did you speak to them?”

Tommy shook his head. “We didn’t get the chance because I ran.”

Mirage nodded, sinking back in his chair. “Why didn’t you report the sighting?”

Tommy shrugged. “I was scared, just didn’t think of it.”

Mirage clicked his tongue but didn’t push it further, opening the folder again before looking back up. “An orphan, huh?”

The way he said it, so carelessly and accusatory it made Tommy falter, face falling. He looked down at the table, pursing his lips. “Yeah.”

“I don’t see any guardians, I’m assuming you’re still in the system?”

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, shaking his head slightly. “Emancipated,” he corrected, the word felt like a death sentence as it flitted through the air.

Mirage was unbothered, however, and just nodded again before continuing through the manilla folder that Tommy could only assume had his entire life story in it.

It was quiet for another moment, papers flipping over and the occasional chair squeak from Mirage moving around were the only things that filled the silence.

“Alright Tommy, how well do you know your coworkers?”

The question was hard to answer, he knew most of their names and abilities, but that was about as far as it went. Well, of course with the exception of Niki and Sally, who knew of his crime. So he decided on a vague answer. “I know them well enough.”

Mirage didn’t seem satisfied by that, but was quickly halted in his further questioning by something on the next page of Tommy’s file. “You lied.”

Tommy’s breathing stuttered and his heart leapt in his throat, he curled his fingers into his sleeves and managed to get out a confused mumble. “Huh?”

When he looked up, Mirage was glaring at him, gripping the sheet of paper in a way that almost crumpled it. “You have come across a villain.”

“When?”

The way he said it, so hesitant and unsure made Mirage pause for a second, looking at him before answering. “When you were performing surgery on your patient,” he glanced down at the paper, voice gentler than before, “Technoblade Craft? Bombs were going off and... and a dark figure appeared and killed the gunman who threatened yours and your patient’s life?”

Tommy was surprised by the sudden understanding in the hero's voice, his presence shifting from suffocatingly terrifying to sympathetic. Tommy didn't know how to feel about that. "Dark figure?"

Mirage nodded slightly, sighing. "Do you recall anything from that encounter? Any injuries you can't explain? Gaps in your memory?"

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed, trying to remember what happened in that small time frame. As he stared at the table, he felt himself grow more panicked, he didn't know what happened. It was like there was always a blank there when he knew he saw something or *someone* during that time. The time between threatening the gunman and falling onto his hands and knees outside the hospital were blurring together the more he thought about it.

Tommy didn't even realize his breathing was growing erratic until Mirage put both his hands flat on the table and spoke as tamely as he could. "It's okay, you're fine. Just breathe, you're safe here."

Every word that came out of Mirage's mouth somehow made it worse, maybe it was that he knew it was a big lie, that he wasn't safe at all. He wasn't okay and didn't think he would ever be okay, especially not after what he did. He would be persecuted for his crime without mercy and Tommy couldn't take that fact.

"I- I'm sorry," he said between deep breaths, meek as he gripped the edge of the table. "I can't remember."

Tommy hated that his memory was so unreliable, that his sense of time was so skewed and he was always so detached from reality. The fact he could *feel* the blank space in his mind was all the more overwhelming. Tommy forced himself to focus on the moment, avoiding the piercing eyes of Mirage as he tried and failed miserably to get him to calm down. Tommy just wished Mirage would shut up or go away, he could barely breathe.

The buzzing of the fluorescent lights above him was suddenly grating against his ears like he had never heard a louder sound. The smell of hydrogen peroxide stung his nose, and the table was too close to his chest, suffocating.

When he started finally getting ahold of himself, lungs aching, he looked up and was hit with a rush of warmth on his neck from embarrassment, making him nauseous. Mirage was just staring down at him and Tommy wasn't able to tell what he could be thinking because of his mask, and at that point, he didn't want to know.

Tommy wrapped his arms around himself, ducking his head shamefully. That was the first time he had ever had a panic attack in front of someone, he had never felt so pitiful before, and of course, it was Mirage who watched the entire thing.

"You good?" Mirage asked after a few seconds.

Tommy nodded, folding his hands together in an attempt to seize their trembling.

“Alright... I think that’s enough questions for today,” he said awkwardly, walking over to the door and waving him along.

Mirage led Tommy back to the break room where his coworkers were sitting on tables and in the chairs, still in order, but in a messier array. Hazard himself was sitting across from them on a table, fidgeting with his bulletproof vest.

“You’re all dismissed for today. But, I’ll be back, so don’t think about skipping town.”

Everyone stood up with similar sighs of relief, avoiding eye contact with both heroes as they all filed out of the room. Tommy was eager to follow.

Once he got out into the hallway, out of any hero’s eye line, a hand grabbed his elbow and took him aside. Tommy turned, an almost fearful lilt to his expression that settled once he saw Niki’s one of concern.

“Are you okay?” Niki asked, frowning at the distant stare already making its way onto his face. “Tommy?”

He nodded, inhaling and exhaling slowly, hiding his wince when he realized how sore his lungs were. She ignored his confirmation, however, and moved her grip to his shoulders.

“Are you sure? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

There was a beat before Tommy answered quietly. “Maybe I did. I just can’t remember.”

Niki’s eyebrows furrowed as if trying to decrypt what he said for some deeper meaning. Her eyes then flicked up somewhere over his shoulder. “Do you need a ride home after your shift?”

It was Tommy’s turn to be confused. Sure Niki had offered to drive him home from work several times, though she had given up on asking after a while of him declining her kindness. So there was clearly something else going on, which made sense considering the circumstances. He looked back and saw a camera blinking in red at them, she must have something she had to say to him then. “Yeah,” he muttered, nodding. “It’s quite chilly out tonight, I hear.”

A smile pulled at her lips and her hold loosened on his shoulders, as if out of relief. “Yeah, it is. I’ll see you after our shift.”

Tommy nodded once more before she let go and they went separate ways.

...

Tommy’s shift was the same as usual. He had another regular come in, which dropped his mood significantly more than it already was, which he didn’t know was possible. It was a man who looked older than Wilbur, his arm broken and bleeding. When Tommy saw him, the man just grinned despite the pain he had to be in.

Tommy tried to fix it with the tools they had but after an x-ray, he found it was not only broken but shattered. He finally had to relent and heal it, giving the addict what he wanted and draining his energy in the process.

So when Niki held him by the arm and led him to her car, eyes drooping, he allowed the manhandling with little annoyance.

He plopped himself down into the passenger seat, hands on the strap of his newly returned messenger bag. Niki got into the driver's seat and quickly started the car, giving him a reassuring smile that was far too strained to be genuine.

"We're going to make a pitstop first," she said vaguely, knuckles going white around the steering wheel as she backed out of her parking space.

"Oh," was all Tommy managed, fidgeting with his ID. The picture of him on it only made him sadder, a permanent frown on his young face. He remembered the day he got that picture taken, the photographer had told him to smile but quickly gave up with a stilted silence after he said nothing and continued to scowl.

He never wanted to be a doctor, not that he knew what he would actually be instead, he was never given the chance or option to think about it. It was always his fate to be a doctor. He was destined to be a lifeless machine from the start.

Sometimes, Tommy would be jealous of his coworkers or even random people he passed on the street. They got to have a family, a life, a childhood. All Tommy got was money and a one way ticket to a mental hospital when his sanity eventually ran out.

Tommy liked to think that maybe in another life, he would've been able to be a kid. That maybe he would have a family and some stupid ability that he would complain about, unaware of how good he had it. But, Tommy could only wish, so he tucked his ID in his coat pocket to avoid looking at it.

As Niki began to drive, Tommy just stared out the windows, the light from the lampposts washing over him in a rhythmic pattern. The silence in the car was stifling but Tommy couldn't care less, he was just absorbed in watching as the buildings whizzed by, a blur in his eyes when he unfocused for too long.

They eventually came to a stop at a dollar store lot, parking next to a white SUV that had little stickers on the back window, Tommy spotted a soccer ball and a red fox, but after they rolled up directly next to it he couldn't catch sight of any more.

Niki rolled down her window and Tommy's eyebrows only furrowed, following her eyes to the tinted front windows of the SUV. After a moment, the passenger window rolled down and Tommy was only half surprised to see Sally leaning over the center console to see them better.

"Hey Sal," Niki greeted, sighing deeply and leaning back for Sally to see Tommy. He waved awkwardly and shrunk down in his seat when her gaze flickered into pity before she looked back to Niki.

“Hi Niki, I see you brought him,” she said, a strange edge to her voice when addressing Tommy’s presence.

“Yeah, I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you, it was too risky to talk to you again at work and honestly I didn’t think he would agree anyway.”

Tommy shrugged when they both looked at him and it was then that he realized they had originally planned to have a conversation without him. After the night’s circumstances, the idea of that unsettled him.

“It’s okay, we need to talk to him anyway. Tommy, what happened during your interrogation with Mirage?” Sally asked, finally directing a question at him.

“Oh, well,” he paused, pursing his lips as he remembered how he embarrassed himself. “He brought up that night and how I was late to work. I told him there was an emergency that night and I didn’t have time to clock in until later.”

Niki nodded approvingly, looking to Sally for confirmation of their story. “Good, that’s good,” Sally muttered, looking up in thought. “I do wonder though... what’s our end goal here? Mirage isn’t going to stop looking for this ‘rogue’, so unless someone else gets blamed for it, it’s likely we’ll get caught in the end.”

That was what had been on Tommy’s mind the entire day, it was inevitable. No matter how long he prolonged it with lies and coordination, someone would be dragged away, and Tommy wouldn’t be able to live with the guilt if it was anyone but him.

Niki looked at him for a moment before turning to Sally and answering. “Well, I don’t know yet. But, we’ll figure it out. Tommy’s just a kid, he doesn’t deserve any of this, especially when he was just trying to help someone in need. We’re going to keep this lie up for as long as we can, and we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it. Hell, Mirage might even give up and leave before we get to that point.”

Sally looked like she wanted to say something, but just held her tongue, sighing. “You’re right. We’ll figure it out.”

They all sat there for a minute, trying to think of anything else to say, until Niki spoke up again. “We should probably go now, someone might see us.”

Sally agreed wordlessly and they both rolled up their windows, cars rumbling to life again in unison. Niki glanced at him with a frown Tommy had seen on her many times before, then she tore her head away and focused on the road as she navigated them out of the parking lot.

The whole time Tommy could only dwell on everything that had happened. Within that, he could only regret. Though, he didn’t regret healing a person who was dying, as inconvenient as it was that it was a villain, he couldn’t bring himself to regret that. What he did regret was leaving himself on bad terms with those around him. Because while Niki was smart, she was too optimistic. Tommy was realistic, and the reality was that he was as good as dead.

So while Niki was planning for the best, Tommy was already planning his last moments of freedom.

## Chapter End Notes

anyone else ever been so embarrassed so quickly that you get a rush of nausea and shit?  
....just me? damn ok 🙄

well, tommy is in quite the predicament. i wonder what he might do...

# all the fears you hold so dear

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur took out a box cutter and sliced the tape off a cardboard box, opening it up to reveal a guitar sitting in packing peanuts. He was about to pick it up when the bell over the front door rang, making him pause.

“I’ll be right with you!” He shouted, sighing as he grabbed the guitar and stood up straight, making his way out of the back room. Wilbur didn’t bother looking at the customer as he walked up to the wall of guitars and hung it up, adjusting it so it wouldn’t fall.

He turned around and met the eyes of the person who entered the store, a gasp escaped him and he froze.

## Chapter Notes

// suicidal thoughts/attempt?, depression, derealization, violence/injury/blood

yall are gonna love and hate me for this one :)  
ALSO! tysm for 42k hits!! thats crazy!! :D

chapter title is a lyric from [Duvet by bôa](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy woke up suddenly, sweat brimming his forehead and his hands shaking. Though he couldn’t remember why. Like trying to keep water cupped in his hands, the nightmare slipped through his fingers with every second he was awake.

His head swiveled to his window, his blinds were closed but he knew it was sometime in the late afternoon by the light seeping through the cracks. Blinking, Tommy dragged his hands down his face and then up through his hair, grimacing when his fingers caught onto several knots.

Tommy dropped his hands and stared down at them, glaring at his palms like they had personally wronged him. In his defense, they technically had, even if he was the one in control who willed them to heal a villain.

Tommy laid back down, pulling the covers over his shoulders, curling up under them. Then, after a couple of minutes of his eyes staying completely open, thinking of nothing and everything, he sat up.

He stayed there on his bed for a few minutes more, just staring. Then, after his brain was content with the amount of mindless buzzing it had just done, he got up and wandered into the bathroom.

Tommy frowned when he made eye contact with his reflection, seeing a mess of a boy looking back at him. He was wearing sweatpants and a blue t-shirt two sizes too big for him, something he had changed into after scrubbing the hospital off of him in the shower. His hair was wild, though dry even after his shower which had to be only a few hours prior.

Tearing his eyes away from his reflection, he turned on the sink and splashed his face with water as if it could make him look less dead.

After a few moments he dried his hands and combed them through his hair in an attempt to tame the mess.

Satisfied, he walked back into his room and rifled through his dresser for a pair of jeans and also found a beige sweater.

He all but slithered into them, tossing his worn clothes aside for later judgement.

Sighing, he left his room and went downstairs, wincing at every creak of the floorboards. He eventually found himself in the kitchen, hands itching for the cabinet where the coffee pods lay.

Looking around the kitchen, he realized he hadn't seen or heard Tubbo. Then, he spotted the note taped on the coffee machine in Tubbo's sloppy handwriting.

*Hi Tommy, I didnt want to wake you but I'm going over to Ranboo's tonight. I'll be back before you come home so don't worry. Your lunch is in the fridge. - Tubbo*

Tommy pursed his lips and set the note down, thinking. He had to tell Tubbo eventually, he deserved to know. Especially since Tommy was the main provider of the house.

Though, he was slightly thankful that conversation would not be that night.

So instead, he went back up to his room and sat at his desk, opening his drawer and looking down at the files in it. He purposely ignored the drawer he had all his drafted... *notes* in, he didn't need another reminder of their existence.

Biting his lip, he took his documents out, skimming over them until he found what he was looking for. As morbid as it was, he needed to update his will.



Tommy checked his phone, frowning at the several unread notifications from Wilbur. He turned off his phone and buried it in his jacket pocket, staring at the closed front door.

He looked down at his shoes, the ones he dedicated to wearing outside of the hospital. White offbrand converse he had gotten for twenty dollars at a Payless before they went out of business. They were kind of tight on his feet but lacked the scuffs and grime of time and use. Probably because he rarely had a use for them.

Opening the door, Tommy took in a deep breath and looked up at the sky, squinting when he was bombarded with the light of the sun. It was farther down on the horizon, but not low enough to change the hue of the blue atmosphere.

He strolled down the streets in a path that felt so familiar with his current emotions, guilt welling along with it.

Tommy's eyes were glued to the ground and he bumped shoulders with someone at one point, he didn't look up to see the glare they threw back at him.

He slowed his pace going down a set of stairs, the familiar stench assaulting his nose and the bustling sound piercing his ears.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and unlike the last time, he didn't hesitate after swiping his card, he continued to walk.

He didn't stop walking until he was standing before the bright yellow line, and for the first time since he left his house, he looked up.

The train station was always the same, it was the same when he came last time, it was the same when he would visit every day, wondering when he would give in and it would be his last, and it was the same when he was abandoned there by his parents.

He swayed on his feet, probably due to the fact he hadn't eaten since... did he eat lunch on his last shift? He didn't know.

What he did know was that the voice in his head was louder than usual, the one that told him it would be easier to just give up. The one that used to lead him to the subway station like he was in a trance, disconnected.

Tommy heard the sound of the distance train and a familiar spike of fear laced his body, causing him to tense up. The part of him that relished in the pain urged him to make up his mind. *Do it. It'll solve all your problems. No one will miss you. They won't even think twice about you, just like when your parents left you here.*

Tommy took in a deep breath, hands curling around the fabric of his sleeves.

*With you gone, your coworkers can tell Mirage the truth. You won't be a burden anymore and you won't face the consequences. It's a win-win really!*

Tommy's foot inched closer to the edge, just a tiny, little bit closer.

*There's no other choice, there will never be a happy ending for y-*

"Tommy! Hey man, I thought I recognized you!" An enthusiastic voice from behind him violently yanked him out of his thoughts. Tommy spun around with wide eyes like he had been caught with blood on his hands with his own dead body on the ground next to him.

Jack Manifold's excitement faltered for a split second, turning into something almost disturbed when he locked eyes with Tommy, though he was quick to school his expression.

"How are ya? Haven't seen you in a while," Jack asked, glancing at the ledge.

Tommy shrugged, shoving his hands in his pockets. "The usual, y'know? How've you been?"

Jack seemed confused but nodded anyway, hands idly swinging at his sides. "I've been doin' good! Lots of stuff to report on recently, so I've also been pretty busy."

"Ah, I see."

It was quiet for a few seconds, Tommy didn't know what to say. He surely hoped the man didn't see him staring longingly at the tracks, that would be embarrassing. "Yeah, it's super cool though, getting more recognition for my work. I got promoted too, now I'm more important an' shit."

"That's cool man, congratulations!"

Jack smiled a bit, though it didn't reach his eyes. Did he say something wrong? Wasn't that what people were supposed to say when someone got promoted? "Thanks, mate. You'll have to read my stories sometime, I've been told they're pretty good."

At that, Tommy frowned, ever so slightly, looking down and nodding a little bit. Tommy just said nothing. He didn't want to make a promise he couldn't keep.

Jack shifted awkwardly on his feet and quickly changed the topic, going on about nothing in particular. What Tommy didn't notice was how he was slowly coaxing Tommy away from the edge in time for the train to arrive.

They got on together after Tommy failed to come up with an excuse not to.

Jack chatted with him until he had to get off at his stop, seeming reluctant to leave.

Tommy just gave him a reassuring smile and teasing jeer as he waved him off.

Then he was alone again.

He stared out the windows as the concrete walls sped past. All he could do was think.

...

Tommy blinked when the train came to a stop, looking up and recognizing the station. He considered it for a moment before standing up, following a group of people off.

He didn't look back once his feet hit the concrete, speed walking up and out of the station. Tommy didn't have to strain to remember where to go, he just knew.

~ + ~

Wilbur was tired. His shift was going to be over in an hour or so, and he was having a hard time not dragging his feet.

He had a moment of reprieve since it was getting later in the day and no one was in the shop, so he took the time to restock the walls.

Wilbur took out a box cutter and sliced the tape off a cardboard box, opening it up to reveal a guitar sitting in packing peanuts. He was about to pick it up when the bell over the front door rang, making him pause.

"I'll be right with you!" He shouted, sighing as he grabbed the guitar and stood up straight, making his way out of the back room. Wilbur didn't bother looking at the customer as he walked up to the wall of guitars and hung it up, adjusting it so it wouldn't fall.

He turned around and met the eyes of the person who entered the store, a gasp escaped him and he froze.

Tommy was standing as still as he could, eyes as wide as Wilbur's, as if he wasn't the one to walk in on his own accord. Like it had been Wilbur giving him the cold shoulder the entire time.

"Tommy? Uh-" Wilbur started, shifting nervously on his feet. Wafts of underlying guilt and anxiety coming off of him, but something Wilbur wasn't expecting was the overwhelming defeat and hopelessness he was feeling. "I didn't think-"

"I'm sorry," Tommy breathed, running his hands through his hair. "I should've said right away, but I was just being- I don't know."

"What? Tommy, what are you talking about?"

"I've been- oh come on please don't make me say it," there was a pause where Wilbur just shook his head, mouth agape. "I- okay I've been a dick recently and it's not your fault and it's just- I don't know! It's not your fault but it still upset me because..." he trailed off, hands gripping the front counter.

“Tommy, hey, it’s okay. It’s...” Wilbur pursed his lips, anxiously wringing his hands out in front of him. They were both standing there, about ten feet apart in a tense silence. “Here, come here and we can talk,” he said, gesturing to the couch nearby. It was the same one Wilbur had played Tommy his guitar on not that long ago.

Tommy reluctantly nodded and slowly followed Wilbur over to the couch, sitting down at the other end. Though it was only three cushions long, the distance put between them was still painfully obvious.

“What’s wrong, Tommy? You’ve been acting off recently and it’s worrying me,” Wilbur said softly, tilting his head. “What’s on your mind?”

Tommy looked down at his knees, almost like he wanted to pull them up to his chin and curl in on himself. “Well, I... I guess I should just get it over with,” he sighed, glancing up at him for a second, fidgeting with a loose thread on the couch cushion he was sitting on. “Last week today I was caught up in a villain fight,” Tommy said, wincing when Wilbur tensed up. “I- I was being chased and I was so... I didn’t like it.”

Wilbur purposely ignored how Tommy avoided admitting that he had been scared, Wilbur had felt that fear himself. He was the one who vacuumed out the emotion so he could focus on getting away that night, it was a disturbing amount of it welled up in the boy’s mind.

“I lost my phone while running or something so I went to a nearby gas station and used the man’s phone there... I didn’t have anyone to call. Then, I remember what you had told me.”

As Tommy spoke more, Wilbur’s face dropped a little more. He had a feeling he knew where this was going.

“I called you, several times, and you didn’t pick up,” Tommy spoke more quietly now, sheepish. Then, he shook his head. “And it’s so stupid because- because I knew you were probably asleep and I was calling from a different number- I shouldn’t have expected you to pick up but... I still felt...” he trailed off, though he didn’t have to explain it to Wilbur for him to know.

“Oh Tommy I’m so sorry,” Wilbur sighed, dragging his hands down his face. “I- well, I was asleep I don’t know if I had my phone on me or- I’m sorry, I wish I had been there.”

Tommy peeked up at him and something like relief wafted over him. “It’s fine. You shouldn’t be sorry, you had no idea.”

Wilbur pursed his lips but didn’t disagree, choosing to say nothing. He didn’t like lying to Tommy, but it was something he had to do to keep his identity and Tommy safe. Technically, he was there that night. Not as Wilbur Craft, but as Tragedy. He was there, fighting for his life and safely getting Tommy out while helping his brother. When Tommy had probably gone to call him, he was still causing a distraction for Tommy to get far enough away.

But obviously, he couldn’t tell him that, so he lied.

“Well, I am sorry because I told you I would be there if you needed me and I wasn’t.”

Tommy just pursed his lips and shook his head. “It’s okay, I just- I thought I should tell you why because it wasn’t your fault. It was all in my head.”

Wilbur sighed but didn’t say anything more, he didn’t know what he even should say. Then, Tommy stood up.

“Uhm, now that’s settled, I’ll get out of your hair now,” he mumbled, taking a step away from the couch.

Wilbur got to his feet as well, eyebrows pinching together in confusion. “Wait,” Wilbur said, hand held up in a ‘stop’ motion. Tommy paused and looked up at him, balling his fists up in the fabric of his sleeves. “You don’t have to go. You’re not bothering me at all.”

Tommy hesitated, shifting on his feet awkwardly.

“There’s not going to be many customers so it wouldn’t be a problem at all. I could play you another song if you wanted,” Wilbur offered, tilting his head at him.

Tommy seemed to think on it for a moment, staring at him with a blank look while a range of emotions swam laps in his head. Then finally, he nodded, a slight smile creeping up on his face. “One of your songs?”

Wilbur grinned, reaching over and grabbing his guitar case from where it was leaning against the couch. “Sure.”

~ + ~

*The night was dark. More than it ever had been, it seemed. There were no stars in the sky and barely any street lights lit up the area around him. Not even the moon graced him with its comforting presence.*

*Any other night, it might’ve been peaceful. He might’ve climbed up onto the roof of the tower and laid on his back, gazing up at nothing while his mind wandered.*

*This night was very different.*

*He was running. Though, that’s not what made it unlike his other patrols, he was always running. But this time, it was different in the way his heart was leaping out of his chest, how his legs burned with every step, how he was utterly terrified.*

*It was supposed to be a casual patrol, like he did every day since his promotion. But he had run into what he thought was an average robbery alone, only to get caught up in something much worse.*

*He was fresh out of needing a supervisor on patrols, something he had worked very hard for. Though in those moments he worried he would be benched. Well, if he even got out alive.*

*Inexperienced, weak, and too big for his boots. He was made quick work of, heads had swiveled around so quickly at his sudden entrance.*

*Immediately identified as a federal hero, the Syndicate's goons wasted no time covering their tracks while the men in charge dealt with the intruder.*

*He was outnumbered, but he fought back. He used his sword just as he was taught; slashing out, parrying, blocking. But, it wasn't enough against two villains who killed like second nature and fought with every ounce of their pride.*

*He knew he was screwed when his sword sliced clean through flesh, a vast difference from hitting armor and training dummies. Everyone faltered for a moment as Comedy gasped, grasping at his shoulder. Blood was spilling rapidly from the wound, so much so that he forgot where he was and what was happening.*

*He fell flat on his back, the air was ripped straight out of his chest, causing his grip to loosen on his sword. It went flying out of his hands, too far to try to grab it again. His elbows hit the concrete floor as he tried to sit up, only to be kicked back down.*

*A silhouette stood above him, a withering bend of the air fluttering around him. Under the veil, his face was obscured by pure night, and eerily so. The man was draped in dark cloth, seemingly robes and a cloak of some sort, billowing around him in a windless building. Though, the most disturbing of all was his massive black scythe, the blade glinting in the dim light where it was tightly held in his hand.*

*"You'll be a good example," the man deemed, a sick twist to his voice as he raised his scythe above his head. Hundreds of black birds appeared from behind him, screeching and cawing as they filled the room.*

*Darting his aching head around, he cowered, putting his hands up to shield himself as the birds began to circle him like a tornado. Predatory.*

*Taking in a sharp breath, his eyes were wide as the scythe came down on him. He lifted his leg up in a kick, only for a piercing pain to stab through his calf, spiking up his body.*

*He cried out, twisting and fighting as the birds descended, sweeping their prey up in a flurry of feathers. He only heard one last thing before he was outside, stood up on the sidewalk, faced in the direction of the hero tower:*

*"I'll give you a ten second head start."*

~ + ~

A knock on his door startled him awake, embarrassingly making him flinch. He shifted on his bed, hand grazing over the scar on his leg.

“Who is it?” He asked, a slight hiss in his tone that he didn’t bother correcting.

“Calm down, man. It’s just me,” Sapnap huffed from the other side. “George and I are able to join you this time.”

Pausing, he looked over at the alarm clock on his bedside table. It doubled as a siren for whenever he needed to tend to an emergency when he was asleep. It was a bulky thing, specially made for him with his more violent tendencies in mind.

He recalled the last one he had, broken after less than a week of owning it. Then, he read the time, his sleep ridden mind finally catching up with him.

“Oh, I... I think I’ll pass tonight. I have something else I want to look into. Just make sure all of those healers stay in town and tell me if anyone calls in a sick day.”

Sapnap was quiet for a moment before speaking again. “I thought finding the rogue was your main priority?”

Pursing his lips, he held back the urge to snap and kept his voice as low as possible. “My priorities are none of your concern.”

Sapnap didn’t say anything else for a long few seconds before sighing. “Whatever dude.”

He didn’t move until he heard Sapnap’s footsteps retreating down the hallway.

After he could no longer hear Sapnap’s heavy boots colliding with the floor outside his room he stood and walked over to his desk.

He sat down and opened his laptop, opening a new tab in the hero database. Then, Dream began more research on the mysterious third leader of the Syndicate.

## Chapter End Notes

yeahhhhhhhhh mb ahahaha 🐈

anyway leave a comment if ya want, i love reading them :)))

# paranoia is in bloom

## Chapter Summary

Tommy was so caught up in trying to escape, trying to kick out the man's knees from behind him and fight back, that he didn't even notice the car pulling up and stopping with a squeal of the breaks.

A moment later the man dropped him with a yelp, making Tommy fall back harshly onto the concrete. His head bounced when it hit the ground and the air was knocked out of his lungs, causing him to take in a wheezy breath.

Tommy blinked and when he lifted his head, he saw the man laying on the ground ten feet ahead with a familiar figure standing over him. Then, the figure pulled his leg back, hands casually in his trench coat pockets, and kicked the man in the stomach. Then he did it again, and again, and again.

## Chapter Notes

// blood, injury, argument, general violence, knife, attempted kidnapping, drug use/addiction

YOOO 50K HITS?? DAMNNN TYSM GUYS !!!  
ALSO CONGRATS TO ME BC MY ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY ON AO3 WAS  
THE OTHER DAY LOL

and sorry posts have been kinda sparse finals were kicking my ass but its summer now so hopefully i'll have time to write more >:))

you are going to love this chapter i just know it, its also officially my longest chapter ever, overtaking my last one by landslide with 6,764 words. GAH DAYUM !!

chapter title is a lyric from [Uprising by Muse](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy was feeling better than he had all month. There was a smile on his face so big his cheeks hurt, excitedly bouncing on his feet as he begged Wilbur to play another song.

Wilbur sighed and nodded, though he too was grinning, feigning annoyance that once might've made Tommy unsure and nervous. But he didn't have room in his brain to overthink



when his ears were filled with the sound of a strumming guitar and his friend sheepishly humming lyrics he was too shy to sing.

It was a refreshing change of pace compared to the past week he spent avoiding Wilbur. It made him realize how much he lifted his spirits. How much he needed Wilbur in his life.

Wilbur was the bright splash of color on his dull, black and white life. Not that he would ever tell him that.

It was then, at that moment, Tommy saw how much one person changed his depressing life. It was a positive thing, though he also couldn't help but feel guilty about what he was about to do at the train station.

Just the thought of it at the moment while he was content, happy even, made him feel sick.

He only noticed he had fallen from reality when the music stopped and Wilbur was asking him something.

He looked up like he was stuck in slow motion, meeting Wilbur's concerned gaze from next to him on the couch. Tommy heard Wilbur's voice, but it took him a moment to register the words from gibberish.

"Are you okay?"

He nodded, trying to banish the blur of the train flying past from his mind.

"Are you sure? You look kind of pale," Wilbur asked, tilting his head as he settled his guitar more comfortably on his lap. "It wasn't my terrible playing was it?" He joked weakly, fidgeting with his hands.

"Oh no, of course not," Tommy said, shaking his head. "I was just—" he paused turning his head toward the clock on the wall. "I just remembered I need to go to work soon."

It wasn't technically a lie. He was dreading going back to the hospital. Fearing that someone found out and he was going to be dragged away as soon as he stepped foot in the doors. But he was more terrified of going back to the train station for a ride home.

"I have to leave earlier to account for the walk."

Wilbur's face dropped more into a frown and he looked down thoughtfully. "I could drive you."

The solution was so easily delivered, like it wasn't a burden for Wilbur to drive him home and then all the way to work. "What?" He blurted dumbly, giving him a confused look.

Wilbur shrugged, jerking his head in the direction of the clock. "I have to close in a few minutes anyway. It seems like our schedules line up."

Tommy wanted to protest, he wanted to tell Wilbur he would be fine and didn't want to be a burden. But the more selfish part of his brain, the part that was afraid of walking alone and

going to the train station, was louder. “Fine.”

Wilbur’s grin returned and he jumped to his feet, grabbing his guitar case. “Okay! I’m gonna start closing up.”

Tommy sighed, watching as Wilbur started putting things away and locking the more expensive things in the storage closet.

He couldn’t help but feel a wave of sudden relief. He did it. He told Wilbur why he was upset and they were on good terms.

It made him feel a little lighter.

...

As soon as the car was started, Wilbur started messing with the settings, connecting his phone. He paused to look over at Tommy. “Buckle your seatbelt,” he huffed, raising an eyebrow when Tommy just groaned.

“Ranboo doesn’t make me buckle up,” he complained, slumping down and glaring up at Wilbur.

Trying to hold back a smile, he shook his head, keeping his voice stern. “Buckle your seatbelt, Tommy. If we crash, your head is going straight into the windshield.”

Tommy scowled and crossed his arms, opening his mouth like he was going to say something snarky, before wincing and closing his mouth. He relented and buckled his seatbelt, sitting up straighter.

Wilbur gave a hum of approval then focused back on his phone. He typed in his password and tapped on something, looking up at Tommy expectantly. “Any song requests?”

Tommy’s eyebrows furrowed as he quickly racked his brain, trying to think of a song or at least an excuse to why he didn’t have one. “I dunno,” he said after a moment, looking back up to see Wilbur looking slightly confused.

“Really? None?”

Tommy shrugged and leaned back more in the passenger seat, staring at the part of the dashboard that was labeled as an airbag. “I don’t listen to music much.”

At that, Wilbur frowned and was quiet for a moment, pulling something up on his phone. “Well, we are going to fix that.”

Tommy smiled at the determination in his voice, looking to the screen on the dashboard when it changed to show the name of a song. *‘Uprising by Muse’* glowed back at him in the general dark lighting of the car.

Wilbur put the car in reverse and started out of the parking lot, then watched for Tommy’s reaction as the music started.

*“Paranoia is in bloom...”*

~ + ~

When they arrived at Tommy’s house they were listening to another song, letting it end before Wilbur took the keys out of the ignition.

Tommy unbuckled his seatbelt and paused when he noticed Wilbur wasn’t unbuckling his. “I can stay in the car if you want,” he offered, voice quieter than before.

“Oh no, come in! I need to change and shit so it might take some time,” Tommy said, shrugging.

Wilbur pursed his lips, glancing at the house. “What about your roommate? I don’t think he likes me.”

Tommy scoffed, then it turned into a laugh. “Maybe not yet, but he will. He just doesn’t know you,” he assured, smiling at him. It felt like the most honest thing he had said all day. “But he’s not here right now anyway.”

Wilbur looked apprehensive but nodded anyway, unbuckling and getting out of the car. Tommy followed suit, hearing their car doors close in unison, rounding the vehicle toward the front door.

Tommy took out his key and listened inside for a moment before unlocking the door and opening it. He walked in and immediately noticed he had left some of the lights on and kicked off his shoes by the door.

Once Wilbur entered behind him, he just stood at the entrance awkwardly, like he didn’t know what to do.

Tommy gave him a grin and gestured to the living room. “Make yourself at home.”

Wilbur’s tenseness lessened a little and he walked into the living room, eyes catching onto the various plants scattered around.

Satisfied, Tommy left him be and hurried up the stairs, being as quick as possible. For the first time ever, Tommy had a smile on his face while getting ready for work.

~ + ~

Wilbur was just standing around, admiring the various plants Tommy's roommate had everywhere when he heard the sound of a car door slam shut. He froze in place, ears practically perking up at the sound, sending him back to the field.

Making his footsteps as silent as he could, he walked over to the front window and peered through the blinds. Wilbur sighed in relief when he realized it was just Tommy's roommate, Tubbo and his friend he'd seen at the hospital. For a moment, he had been worried that the surveillance vans strategically placed across the street had decided to strike out of the blue.

Wilbur watched as Tubbo rounded his car, a tight expression on his face as he gestured to it and hissed something to his tall friend, who was standing off to the side rather awkwardly.

Then, Wilbur recognized the sound of Tommy running down the stairs quickly, knowing he must've heard them too. He turned and met Tommy's frantic gaze, expression dropping minutely.

Clipping his ID to his lab coat pocket, Tommy rushed up to Wilbur's side to look out the front window as well, nervous energy coming off him in waves.

"You okay, Tommy?" He asked, barely catching his attention as Tommy ran off into the kitchen. Wilbur followed, watching him take something out of the fridge and shove it into his messenger bag.

Tommy looked up and nodded tensely, glancing toward the front door. "Oh, yeah yeah, all good. Just- I didn't think he'd be back this early, sorry."

Wilbur frowned, following Tommy's gaze with a guilty air around them both. "It's quite alright. Though, am I going to get you in trouble with him by being here?"

Wilbur didn't know how his and Tubbo's friendship really was, only hearing bits and pieces from Tommy. But he had seen already how controlling and protective Tubbo was of the boy, so he didn't want to cause any more problems for Tommy between them.

He also didn't want to intrude and stick his nose into something that he didn't fully understand, so he left it up to Tommy.

Hesitating, Tommy turned toward the door, hearing footsteps approaching with the low murmur of voices. He looked back to Wilbur, and that was an answer enough. "I'll talk to him, he's not- he can't *control* me. I'm basically an adult."

Wilbur nodded, a fond expression creeping up onto his face at the familiar words that reminded him of himself and Techno. "Okay, I'll be right over here if you need me," he said softly, jerking his head in the direction of the couch.

Wilbur tried his best not to eavesdrop, really. But it was hard not to focus on the conversation when Tubbo sounded so genuinely annoyed by his presence. He just opened his phone and scrolled through his apps randomly, trying to look engaged in whatever was on his screen.

“-you didn’t even think to tell me? You just went all the way downtown and got in his car without a word? What if something happened to you?”

“Oh my- Tubbo, how many times do I have to tell you? I can make my own fuckin’ decisions and I can choose who I trust,” Tommy argued, many negative emotions radiating from the front door.

“Yeah, well that doesn’t mean I trust him. This is my home too, you know.”

Tommy scoffed, the floor creaking beneath him as he shifted on his feet, probably to cross his arms. “You didn’t ask my permission before bringing Ranboo here the first time! Don’t be a fuckin’ hypocrite.”

“Oh fuck off. Don’t bring Ranboo into this, it’s not the same.”

“Isn’t it though?” Tommy snapped back, Wilbur could practically hear him roll his eyes.

“No, it’s not. It- it’s different.”

“How so?”

Tubbo went quiet and Wilbur continued scrolling, feeling the burning of eyes on the back of his head.

“Exactly,” Tommy’s voice was lower, swiftly being followed by the sound of keys jangling and the swishy fabric of a coat being put on. “Wilbur? You ready, big man?”

Standing up, Wilbur pocketed his phone, walked over to the three, and offered a tight-lipped smile. “Whenever you are.”

Tommy gave him a similar expression but tried to seem more genuine. “Let’s go then. I don’t want to be late,” he huffed, emphasizing the last sentence in Tubbo’s direction.

Tommy brushed past Tubbo who was just fuming silently, while Ranboo was looking rather uncomfortable, his inner emotions matching his output completely. Wilbur offered him a sympathetic nod as he passed by him while he only made direct eye contact with Tubbo before walking out the door.

Tommy didn’t look back as he went straight to Wilbur’s car and opened the unlocked passenger side door. He jumped in without another thought, slamming the door after him. Wilbur circled around to the driver’s side, glancing at Tubbo and Ranboo who were still standing at the front door. He inclined his head in their direction before getting in the car.

When his door closed, Tommy was looking down at his hands, fidgeting with the hems of his sleeves.

Wilbur pursed his lips and decided he would get out of Tubbo’s eye line before talking.

After he started the vehicle, he backed out of the driveway, getting onto the empty road.

He turned to Tommy, frowning at the emotions bundled up inside. “Are you okay?” He asked, keeping his voice soft.

Tommy nodded jerkily, taking to stare out the window.

It was quiet for a moment, the only sound being the whirl of the air conditioning and the hum of the car. Wilbur was about to ask again when Tommy spoke up on his own.

“I’m sorry you had to hear that. You shouldn’t have been stuck in the middle like that.”

Wilbur tilted his head at him thoughtfully, then he looked back at the road with a sigh. “Tommy, it’s not your fault. Don’t worry. I’m not even bothered, I fight with Techno all the time.”

That seemed to calm Tommy’s nerves a little, which Wilbur was glad about. It was better than nothing, and it was definitely better than helping him manually.

It was silent for another moment and Wilbur debated reassuring him more, but Tommy was quick to switch the subject.

“So what is *your* favorite song?”

Wilbur grinned, considerate as he tried to think over an accurate answer. “I don’t know, I have so many.”

Tommy smiled, looking over at him. “Well?”

Wilbur shook his head fondly, taking out his phone and unpausing his playlist once he made it to an intersection. “Happy?”

“Yes, thank you,” Tommy smirked, leaning back in his seat. He began drumming his fingers against the dashboard in tune with the song, nodding his head to the beat.

Wilbur couldn’t help but relish in the positive emotions growing in the car, tapping the steering wheel along with Tommy.

It gave Wilbur a good idea, one that needed some more scheming to be able to be put into action.

The first thing he needed to know was when Tommy’s shift ended. But he had to be careful with his words or Tommy would catch on. He had to be smart about it.

...

Wilbur pulled up to the hospital, music blasting. His smile faltered a little at the sight of it, but Tommy seemed unfazed, still humming the notes of the song.

Tommy guided him to the back door, pointing out where to drive. Then, he slowed the car to a stop.

“Well, this is my stop,” Tommy said, seeming hesitant as his hand hovered over the door handle. “I’m surprised you got me here at a good time, my shift starts in like ten minutes.”

Wilbur nodded, trying to determine how to go about it, then he remembered this wasn’t one of his missions. He didn’t have to be extra sneaky to accomplish his goal. “Yep, I’m an amazing driver,” he snickered, ignoring Tommy’s eye roll. “When does your shift end anyway?”

The question quickly sent the car into a tense silence, making Wilbur anxious. He tried to tell one emotion from the other, but Tommy himself was too confused emotionally. “Oh, in ten hours.”

Wilbur tried to hide his grimace, calculating that Tommy had been working fifty-hour weeks the whole time. “Alright,” he said quietly, swallowing the lump in his throat.

Tommy stared at him for a moment longer before unbuckling his seatbelt. “Okay, well bye Wilbur!”

“Bye Tommy, have a good night,” he waved as the boy opened the car door, stepping out and pausing. He looked up at Wilbur and waved back. Wilbur waited until Tommy was in the motion of closing the door when he dropped the last part on him. “Be ready for me to pick you up.”

A victorious smirk broke out on his face once Tommy had closed the door, looking at him through the window with a shocked look. Wilbur laughed and Tommy reluctantly did as well, rolling his eyes and turning around toward the hospital when Wilbur started to drive away.

Mission accomplished.

~ + ~

Tommy entered work with a tenseness to his shoulders he saw mirrored in all of his coworkers, an eerie silence donning the hospital. The patients definitely sensed it, but no one had the guts to point it out.

He had already clocked in, looking around for Niki like a lost puppy. Maybe she knew something he didn’t. Even if she was as clueless as he was, she was a familiar comfort he sought out.

His search was cut short while wandering the halls, noticing he hadn’t seen a nurse or doctor walking around. A spike of panic jolted him into alertness as he rushed to the breakroom, his lab coat swishing with his speed.

Tommy slowed down once he walked into the breakroom, nervously looking around and finding his coworkers collected there again. His eyebrows furrowed when he realized they

were all in a messy crowd rather than an organized line, some sitting on the tables or chairs while some stood.

He quickly spotted Niki standing somewhere in the middle, arms crossed and lips drawn in a thin line. Next to her was Sally who was wearing a similar expression, eyes narrowed suspiciously.

Tommy was about to go stand next to her when someone blocked his path. Pursing his lips, he looked up to meet the eyes of Melatonin. The man was looking as tired and bored as he always did, staring down at a clipboard in his hands.

Melatonin looked up and stared at him for a second before looking back down. "Name, occupation, and ability?"

"Uh Tommy Metro," he answered awkwardly, shifting from foot to foot as he felt the eyes of his coworkers land on him.

He was just about to continue when Melatonin prompted him again with an unamused glare. "Occupation and ability?"

"Trauma doctor, my ability is standard healing."

Melatonin scribbled something down on the clipboard and turned away, waving him off to the rest of the group.

Sighing, he let his shoulders drop and went over to Niki and Sally, ignoring the gazes of his peers on his back.

He nodded to them both and stood next to Niki, looking to the front of the room where two heroes stood, looking rather out of place.

"Um," Matchbox started, clasping his hands together. He turned and looked to Melatonin, who just shrugged. "Well, there has been a change of plans. Because the lead investigator is currently... occupied, this case is being put on a very temporary pause. But no one is leaving the country or even going out of town, nothing. Your activity is still being monitored."

There was a hum of groans and general displeasure through the room and Matchbox sighed heavily, picking up the clipboard Melatonin had set down nearby.

"I know I know, it sucks. But don't shoot the messenger here, alright? Just tellin' you what I was told."

The noises calmed down, though there was some quiet chatter amongst them. Tommy glanced at Niki and Sally but kept his mouth shut.

"Now, go on with your nights. But be prepared tomorrow for the same routine until Mirage is back."

Upon being dismissed, everyone started filing out of the room, whispers and the shuffling of shoes on the tile floor filling the air.



Washed up in the crowd, Tommy lost Niki and Sally again. But instead of feeling extremely anxious, he just felt tired. After another minute or two of looking, he just gave up and got to work.

...

Without much thought, he found who his first patient of the night was and sighed. He was thankful he only had a non-emergency so far, so he could go to the quieter, more private rooms on the first floor. Most of the emergency rooms were just curtains surrounding a hospital bed, but those were reserved for people that needed nurses and doctors going in and out often. Plus, the private rooms were easier to clean and get ready for the next person.

Straightening his shoulders, he walked over to the patient's room, plastering on a weak false front. His patients don't know him well enough to see the difference anyway.

Tommy knocked on the door a few times, waited a couple seconds after the silence, and walked in. "Hello, I'm Dr. Metro, let's see what we have here," he introduced mechanically, closing the door behind him.

Taking in the scene, he looked at the girl sitting on the hospital bed, presumably her father sat next to her in a chair. She looked back up at him and Tommy made the startling realization that she was his age. At that moment, he saw her eyes widen and he knew she made the same connection.

It wasn't often he got patients that were his age, sure he got young children sometimes. But most of his patients were people drugged up to the maximum or night owls that got injured in the dark somehow.

He ignored her lingering stare on his back as he turned to the computer and typed in his ID number and password, skimming over the report the nurse had already typed up for him. She hadn't been deemed an emergency, so a nurse saw her first. Even though it wasn't an emergency, apparently there was still something he had to heal.

Tommy paused when his suspicions were confirmed, her birthday was only a month after his.

Tearing his eyes away from the screen, he gave the girl a reassuring smile, glancing at her father who looked rather tired. "Looks like just a torn ACL? How'd that happen?" He asked conversationally, walking over to the counter and pumping some hand sanitizer into his hands.

Thankfully, the girl didn't question his existence and instead exchanged a look with her father before answering, laughing a little. "I was playing basketball with my friends and fell in a ditch by the court. My friend missed a shot and I went to grab the ball and it was so dark I caught my foot on something and it twisted when I fell."

Tommy nodded, noting her basketball shorts and tank top. The only strange part was that it was dark out, he thought people his age were supposed to be asleep by now. "This late at night?"

Her smile grew a little more sheepish and she nodded, wincing when her knee was jostled by her laughter. “Yeah, my friends thought it would be fun to go after sundown when no one would be there,” she explained, fidgeting with the edge of the hospital bed her legs were hanging off of. “I have a game next week and... can you fix it?” She asked quietly, hesitant.

Tommy looked up again and strengthened his smile. “Of course I can,” he answered easily, straightening his posture. He gestured with his hands toward her knee and she nodded jerkily, scooting forward a little bit. “It’ll only take a second and you’ll be as good as new.”

She nodded again, seeming nervous as reached out. “Wait!” She said suddenly, making him pause. “Uhm... sorry I’ve never been healed before. Will it hurt?”

Tommy gave her a sympathetic look and shook his head. “Not at all. I promise,” he assured her, putting his hand over his heart in emphasis. “The only thing with this is that you’ll have to extend your leg while I heal it, which might feel uncomfortable. I just don’t want the muscle to heal stuck in place like this.”

She still seemed tense, but less scared as she nodded again. “Okay,” she whispered, glancing at her dad who gave her a thumbs up. “I’m ready now.”

Tommy gave her another moment to take it back before he gently cupped his hands over her knee, nodding once at her. “Alright, extend your leg out,” he said as his hands started glowing, the healing power taking effect.

She extended her leg and her eyes widened in awe when it didn’t hurt, amazed at the light coming from his hands as he took a step back. The glow died down and she gasped as she jumped to her feet, testing out the mobility of her newly healed knee.

“Oh my god!” She exclaimed, laughing. “That’s insane!”

Tommy smiled and the girl’s father stood as well, not as surprised but still impressed.

“Thank you so much!”

“It’s no problem. Just doin’ my job,” Tommy shrugged, smiling as he walked over to the computer to log his activity.

She seemed to go a little quiet at that and Tommy didn’t want to turn around to acknowledge that it probably wasn’t the best way to say it.

He had just signed out of the computer when the girl spoke again. “How old are you?”

Tommy froze and slowly turned around to meet her eyes, her father looked like he wanted to apologize, but he also seemed just as curious. He tried to keep the frown off his face, and for a long moment, he just said nothing.

He honestly was tired of the pity he got every time he answered the question. There was nothing he could do about it and there was nothing the person asking could do about it, so it didn’t matter. So he did the logical thing to do; ignore the question.

“Well, it seems like everything here is all wrapped up, and you guys already got the papers situated. So, you’re free to go,” he said, giving them both one last polite nod before turning and leaving the room.

Once the door shut behind him his shoulders slumped and his smile fell as he sighed. The reminder of the unfairness sat so heavily on his back it was suffocating him, pushing on his lungs more than ever.

He felt so confined to his schedule that he never had time for risk and childish fun like that girl did, to play sports or go to school with other kids his age. He had lost it to years of med school and training, with the basics of everything else being only secondary.

But those years were already down the drain, so Tommy forced himself to walk away and figure out what he had to do next.

...

An emergency came in. That was what snapped him out of his haze, pouring over paperwork that seemed to have no end.

Tommy pushed himself to his feet, blinking when his vision darkened for a few seconds before his sight returned. He knew that was a sign of low iron, dehydration maybe, something of the sort. But it wasn’t like he was going to do anything about it, he simply didn’t care enough. So he ignored it.

Speed-walking toward the emergency room, he saw they were already pulling the curtains back, wheeling in a bleeding man.

Eyebrows furrowed, Tommy rushed into the room and realized he was the only doctor in there, nurses were running around, trying to stop the bleeding. “We need a- oh thank goodness! Doc, this man’s arm is cut open and I almost puked-” a newer nurse exclaimed after catching sight of him, rushing over and guiding him to the hospital bed.

Tommy immediately rolled his eyes when he saw the patient, annoyance taking over any concern that he had. It was a regular patient, an addict. Not the one he had seen just the day before, but a different one. He was one of the worst ones, coming in at least once a week with something bleeding or broken for him to heal. Seeing him again made Tommy feel physically sick, a headache was already forming even though he hadn’t even begun to heal him yet.

Tommy knew the frustration was apparent on his face when the nurse stopped rambling and the patient made eye contact with him, flashing Tommy a big, knowing grin.

Normally, this would piss Tommy off to the extreme, knowing that he would have to heal the man only for him to come in a week later to be healed again. But this time, he had the upper hand.

“Could you run and get me a suture kit, please?” He asked the nurse who was talking to him before, giving her a tense smile.

“But- Dr. Metro, you can just heal him,” she said, confused. Tommy nodded in understanding, not sparing a look at the patient.

“He’s an addict, new rules say I don’t have to heal him if it isn’t necessary. We’ll just do it like a doctor who can’t heal would do it,” he told her calmly, watching as the puzzle pieces clicked into place.

She nodded, glancing at the patient with a similar annoyance Tommy was feeling painted on her face. Then, she turned away and rushed off to get a suture kit.

The other two nurses in the room were tense now, awaiting his lead as they pressed gauze on the man’s arm.

When Tommy finally turned and looked at the man, he could see the shock and anger in his expression, glaring up at Tommy like he was the one who inflicted the cut on him. “Just fucking heal me, dude. I’m bleeding out!” The man snapped, punching the side of the hospital bed with his uninjured arm.

“You won’t bleed out, the laceration isn’t big enough for that. We’ll just get you stitched up and on your way,” Tommy reassured plainly, turning and taking the suture kit from the returning nurse. “Thank you!”

Tommy dumped the suture kit out on the metal table in front of him, making a jangle of metallic noises as all the various tools fell out. The man immediately paled, jaw dropping at the number of different needles there were.

“Someone get him something for the pain,” Tommy muttered offhandedly, preparing a needle.

Another nurse nodded and went off to get what they needed while Tommy looked back up at the addict and smiled.

“Hopefully this will be your last visit here for a while. Since I’ve marked you down as an addict an’ all you might not get what you’re looking for anymore.”

The man growled swears and curses at him and that was all the encouragement Tommy needed to continue. He wouldn’t let his power be taken advantage of anymore.

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Tommy was tired when his shift ended. That was a daily occurrence for him, but this time it felt stronger. His best guess was because he didn’t sleep as long as he normally did during the day. But he couldn’t find it in himself to regret it.

He left the building a little quicker than he usually cared to, eyes scanning the dark parking lot for Wilbur’s car. The lot was vast and open, tall streetlights casting a glow over cars in

rows down aisles upon aisles of vehicles.

From the pavement, he couldn't see very far, so he decided to walk further into the parking lot to get a better look.

He had initially been upset at Wilbur for tricking him into letting him do something nice for him, but after a little bit of thinking, the gesture warmed his heart.

After some searching, Tommy started to worry that Wilbur forgot, or changed his mind last minute. Looking through the sea of cars he was doubting his memory, trying to recall the exact color and brand of it.

He was about to text Wilbur and ask if he had been serious when a large hand landed on his shoulder and spun him around.

Tommy froze when he looked up and met the furious gaze of the addict from earlier in the night, sending a spike of fear through him. Then, he made the terrifying connection that it had been a couple hours since he had been discharged from the hospital. He had waited for Tommy.

Before he could move, the man pulled his uninjured arm back and punched him right in the nose, knocking him backward with a sick crack. Tommy gasped, blinding pain exploding from his nose, making his eyes tear up. It was definitely broken.

"But I bet you'll fuckin' heal yourself huh? Selfish *bitch*," the man hissed, shaking his head as Tommy stumbled back, holding his bleeding nose.

Tommy could barely think or see with the pain wracking his nerves and the tears blurring his vision. It just gave the man more time to bask in his misery.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" He taunted, the sound of metal grating against metal sent a wave of fear through him, causing him to gasp and fall backward as he tried to get away. "This is the same knife that I used on my arm earlier. It was all for nothing."

Tommy scooted back on the concrete as the man got closer, his hulking frame looming over him.

"Now you're gonna run back in there like the little pussy you are and take 'addict' off my fuckin' name. I'm not a fucking addict. I just- I *need* it, you don't understand!" The man rambled, laughing a little. "Whenever I get healed it's like- it's like all my problems go away for a while and I feel- I feel unstoppable!"

Tommy just took in a shaky breath, his palms burned as he tried to pull himself back more. The man just kept advancing, knife casually in his hand as if Tommy wasn't completely terrified of him. Tommy recognized the symptoms as the use of some sort of drug, he must've taken something after leaving the hospital.

"You can't take that away from me! Every hospital I go to, they'll reject me! You have to take it off my record. Or- or- I'll fucking kill you," the man threatened, voice lowering as his

eyes snapped to Tommy like he just remembered he was actually there. “ *Or* ,” he laughed as if struck by a genius idea, stomping over and grabbing Tommy by the arm. “You can come home with me! Then I won’t need to go to hospitals...”

“NO! Let me fucking go!” Tommy screamed, breathless and in pain as he kicked out, barely missing the man’s legs as he dragged him between cars. His heart was beating so fast and loudly in his ears that he could hardly think, his breathing was erratic and starting to make his lungs ache. His mind went into survival mode and he thrashed out, but that just pissed the man off more, he turned and slashed out at Tommy with the knife, slicing his forearm open.

Gasping in pain, he felt hot blood drip down the length of his arm, his wrist burning as the man tightened his grip while Tommy fought off the urge to pass out.

He felt like an unruly child again, throwing a tantrum as the nannies dragged him to his shared room for causing a disturbance. The difference was the pure fear he felt, desperately clawing at the ground to catch onto something, *anything*.

He would’ve screamed if he had the air in his lungs to do so, but he knew even then that no one would question it at a hospital. It would be no use.

Tommy was so caught up in trying to escape, trying to kick out the man’s knees from behind him and fight back, that he didn’t even notice the car pulling up and stopping with a squeal of the breaks.

A moment later the man dropped him with a yelp, making Tommy fall back harshly onto the concrete. His head bounced when it hit the ground and the air was knocked out of his lungs, causing him to take in a wheezy breath.

Tommy blinked and when he lifted his head, he saw the man laying on the ground ten feet ahead with a familiar figure standing over him. Then, the figure pulled his leg back, hands casually in his trench coat pockets, and kicked the man in the stomach. Then he did it again, and again, and again.

Tommy felt sick watching the man’s body jolt followed by him curling around himself, only to be kicked again. Even if he did deserve it.

His vision was fuzzy and little flurries of light were dancing around the corners of his vision, making his head feel heavy. So he let his head fall back onto the ground.

He groaned in pain and the rhythmic sound of thick boots connecting with someone’s body ceased. Tommy lifted his head once more to see the figure’s face look over at him in the light, shoulders hunched with something dark gleaming in his eyes.

The look sent a shiver down Tommy’s spine, but it was gone as soon as they made eye contact. Wilbur’s eyes widened and he rushed over to Tommy, dropping to his knees and cupping Tommy’s face in his hands. “Oh my- Tommy! Holy shit what did he do to you? You poor thing, I’m so sorry. Come here,” he crooned, expression filled with worry as he carefully lifted Tommy’s head onto his lap. “I should’ve found you sooner. Just- here, start healing

yourself, there's so much blood! Come on, here lemme just-" Wilbur gasped when he picked up Tommy's limp hands, gently holding them.

Tommy looked down and winced, seeing how torn up his fingers were from scraping them against the concrete ground. His arm was also sliced open pretty badly, far worse than what the man had done to himself.

"Tommy, please, heal yourself. You're bleeding a lot," Wilbur said, tapping him on the shoulder when he blinked for too long.

"I'll be too- I'll fall asleep an' I gotta get 'ome," Tommy slurred, wincing when he scrunched his nose. "I didn't think he would do somethin' like that," he mumbled, leaning into Wilbur's hands.

"You never know what people are capable of," Wilbur said quietly, nudging him lightly. "Don't worry about getting home, okay? I'm sure Tubbo will be worried. I'll get you home, you heal yourself or I'll get in that hospital and get your coworkers on you."

Tommy shook his head, eyes opening a little more. "No! I'll do it."

Wilbur seemed satisfied with that and helped him sit up a little as his hands began to glow, reforming his skin. Tommy leaned against Wilbur heavily, feeling rather pathetic as he felt his energy leave his body in waves. He brushed his newly healed hand up his forearm, sealing up the wound.

Tommy reached up and felt his nose crackle as it snapped back into place, sniffing afterwards. He was about to call it quits when Wilbur guided one of his hands to the back of his head, which felt oddly wet, probably with blood.

He pushed himself further and healed it too, feeling a wave of nausea and exhaustion overtake him. Wilbur let go of his hand and picked him up, one arm under his knees and the other behind his neck and shoulders. It seemed strangely familiar, but he couldn't recall from where.

"Here, you can lay down in the back seat, I need to deal with him anyway," he whispered, opening the door to the back seat of his car and gently situating him inside. Once Wilbur deemed him in a safe enough position to not fall over, he closed the door.

Tommy was left lying in the back for a moment in complete silence, looking up at the dark sky through the front window. His eyes fluttered drowsily and when he opened them again Wilbur was quietly closing the driver's door, holding his phone to his ear.

"I told you already- of course he's fine, he healed himself. He's sleeping in the back of my car right now," Wilbur huffed, sounding vaguely annoyed. There was a long pause and Wilbur sighed while a murmur of a voice said something on the other end. "Yeah, the guy... still alive... well... cameras. What... me to do?!"

Tommy's eyes grew heavier and the words started to blur together until he couldn't make much sense of them, only catching a few here and there. His eyes caught onto the sight of

Wilbur's other hand curl around the wheel, his knuckles dripping with blood. Somehow, Tommy knew most of it wasn't Wilbur's own.

"...him home. Just... over here... I know... aren't allowed to...get dad then..."

There was another pause and Tommy only heard one last thing before his body coaxed him into a restless sleep.

"Get rid... guy, Techno. Do... hell... want, just make it painful."

## Chapter End Notes

now you guys got a glimpse of the more... violent.. side of wilbur. since we've not seen much of it >:)

i would like to clarify rq that i am not a medical professional or anything and half the stuff i write in here is shit i look up on google and the other half is shit i ask my family members who are nurses AND i am writing this in a world where almost everyone has an ability of some kind so theres the unrealistic factor. i do try to make it as realistic as possible though so its more immersive but just know that not every aspect i write in here, especially tommys job, is super accurate LMAO

like the realistic title for tommys job would be "trauma surgeon" but thats not the main thing he does bc there is not rlly a need for emergency surgery other than taking shit out bc he can just heal it.

and doctors in ER's dont usually do as much as im making tommy do, they often have more hands off work and nurses do a lot of the main stuff, but in this universe tommy as a doctor is really important because of his healing power, which changes the need for him to be more hands on along with the actual boring doctor work ofc

sorry for the rant i just wanted to clear it up a bit and i hope that made sense :)



# his mind is in a different place

## Chapter Summary

To keep his mind occupied and alert of himself, he focused on the painting of an emerald on the inside walls of the van. It was a nice shade of green and the detail work was simple, but it worked well for the symbol. He tried to avoid imagining bashing the head of the man in front of him into the wall, obscuring the painting with blood.

His hands twitched.

## Chapter Notes

// torture/violence, blood, addiction, derealization/depersonalization

me and this chapter have a love/hate relationship. literally about had a stroke trying to find a paragraph for the summary bc u just need context for everything 🧠  
diff povs fo this one tho >:)

chapter title is a lyric from [Home by Cavetown](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Techno had just watched his father pull out of the driveway to go to work when Wilbur called him. His twin brother was clearly pissed off, his tone snappish and impatient.

So, Techno did his best not to upset him further while he organized a team, understanding Wilbur's anger once he was told the full story.

That led to where he was then, eyes sifting the hospital's parking lot while the crew in the back talked quietly amongst each other. His hands were tight around the steering wheel, covered in black gloves he usually didn't wear.

He knew it would be too risky to associate with Wilbur as Comedy, so he dressed as one of the other crew members. It was still sketchy as hell, but it worked.

"Hey, one of you deal with the cameras," he said, catching sight of Wilbur's car. Techno drove up and found Wilbur's vehicle parked in one of the spaces in the back, casually chilling there. Then his gaze followed to the middle of the aisle where a man was lying unconscious on the ground, blood collecting under him.

Sighing, Techno pulled up and angled the van so the back door was facing the man, then put it in park.

He jumped out of the car, glancing up at a streetlight and seeing the red light on the camera flick off, followed by the others nearby along with any online dash-cams. He knew it was only a matter of time until the footage was wiped and looped with the recording from minutes before the incident. The clean-up crews were trained to be efficient and fast.

Techno walked right up to Wilbur's car and knocked on the driver's window, crossing his arms. The door opened and Techno opened his mouth to speak, only for Wilbur to *shush* him, holding his index finger up against his lips.

Wilbur got out of the car with a scowl on his face, lowering his hand as he carefully closed the door. "Tommy's asleep, I don't want to wake him up."

After Wilbur's explanation, Techno calmed slightly and his expression softened, frowning. "Is he alright? What did he do to him?"

Wilbur pursed his lips but nodded, antsy on his feet. "He's fine, he healed himself. I only caught the guy dragging him away, I wish I was here sooner but I'm glad I caught him before he could get to his car."

Techno nodded, glancing back at the unconscious man as his crew picked him up systematically, one lifting him under his armpits while another carried his legs into the van. Another crew member quickly went in and started drying up the blood, bleach at the ready.

"I need to get Tommy home soon, I just needed to make sure this guy was dealt with," Wilbur sighed, looking back at the tinted windows of his car. "I also needed some time to figure out how to explain this to Tommy's roommate. The kid is paranoid as fuck."

Techno hummed in understanding, mind racing. "Do you know why this man attacked Tommy?"

That made Wilbur pause, considerate as he tilted his head rather eerily in the dim lighting of the parking lot. "No. But it did look like he was bringing him somewhere. I don't like the thought of that," he shifted on his feet, perching his chin on his bloodied fist. "You could probably look him up in the hospital's database, he was likely a patient here."

Techno nodded again, trying not to notice the unhinged edge his brother carried in the lining of his shoulders, the tone of his voice, and the glimmer in his eyes after his emotions overtook him. It was something he and their father recognized as a side effect of Wilbur's immense power.

Whenever provoked by something that inflicted a strong negative emotion or if he overused his powers, it was easy for Wilbur to lose himself and go off the rails, completely blind to logic and rationality. Techno was surprised Wilbur hadn't already killed the man, to put it simply. He had been shocked when he didn't see the man's intestines unraveled, bits and pieces of him scattered everywhere.

It must've been Tommy, Techno thought belatedly, watching the way Wilbur's eye twitched occasionally, fidgeting with his hands that definitely needed bandaged. Tommy being there probably stopped Wilbur from making a mess Techno and his team couldn't clean up.

"Do you have a name I could run through the system?" Techno asked, eyes gliding down to Wilbur's boots that were covered in blood. Maybe he didn't hold it together entirely...

Wilbur giggled, but he quickly tried to contain it by covering his mouth. If Techno didn't know better, he would've thought he accidentally used his power on Wilbur and he was fighting the effects of it. "We skipped introductions unfortunately," he finally got out, fighting off whatever insanity was swimming around in his circus of a brain.

Techno paused, examining Wilbur for a moment. "That's fine, I'll get a name out of him."

Wilbur nodded, but the movement was jerky and filled with too much energy. It was startling and downright disturbing to anyone who wasn't used to seeing it.

It was then that Techno made up his mind, sighing. He was proud of Wilbur's self-control thus far, but he knew it would come out eventually, and it wouldn't be pretty. There were a few times he and his father had to lock Wilbur up in a room so he could get it out of his system somewhere without accidentally hurting them. But most of the time he just had to wait it out, disperse his emotion in healthy amounts.

Techno remembered the early days of Tragedy and Comedy, when Wilbur got riled up, scared enough, angry enough, he lost control. He would run away thinking he was protecting them, then they would find him hours later in a puddle of blood, they never knew how much was his and how much was someone else's.

But as of late, Wilbur had learned how to contain it better. They didn't know how and Techno had considered asking several times, he just never got around to it.

But in this state, Techno didn't trust Wilbur to drive, or talk to normal people, so he did what he found was the only solution.

"Alright, lay it on me," he said, extending his hand out.

A little while after they discovered Wilbur's side effect, they found a temporary solution; giving it to someone else. It was apparently harder to transfer than other emotions because it wasn't really an emotion, it was a state of mind that clung to an emotion, weighing it down.

Most of the time, it was anger. But other times it would be fear, sadness, and on the rare occasion, love.

Wilbur took a subtle step back, shaking his head. "No, it's too much."

Techno scoffed and rolled his eyes, waving his hand in front of Wilbur's face. "I'll have one of the guys drive, I'll be fine. Probably'll let it out on Tommy's attacker when we get to base anyway."

“But- you’re not as used to it as I am. I’ll just keep it,” Wilbur argued weakly, straightening his shoulders.

“Come on, Wil. You said you have to talk to Tommy’s roommate? You don’t wanna be all... like this when you’re havin’ a conversation with him. What if somethin’ he says triggers you? You just go apeshit on Tommy’s friend?”

Wilbur pursed his lips and huffed. “Fine, but be careful. It’s a lot.”

“I know, Wilbur. I’ve done this before, remember?”

Wilbur just nodded and reluctantly grabbed Techno’s outstretched arm, closing his eyes. Since it was such a heavy burden, Wilbur always refused to pawn it off to someone else like he would with his usual power, Techno was the only exception.

Techno let down his walls and an immediate flush of manic energy made him gasp, adrenaline spiking so quickly it gave him whiplash. Then there was the chatter, it had to be his least favorite part about the whole thing. The way his mind threw intrusive thought after intrusive thought at him, each sounding more and more tempting to actually carry out.

He barely even noticed Wilbur let go of his arm, frowning at him with his shoulders slumped in relief. “Are you okay? I can keep more if it’s too much-”

“It’s fine, Wil,” Techno reassured, eyebrows furrowing when his voice didn’t feel connected to his body. “You go take Tommy home. I’ll- I’ll take care of our problem.”

Wilbur smiled, but it was weak and tense in comparison to the smirk he had been wearing not too long ago. “Alright... I’ll just take back whatever you have leftover when I get home. Remember; stay focused.”

Techno nodded once more, keeping his body locked in place so he didn’t lunge forward and wring his brother’s neck. Wilbur stared at him for another moment before turning and getting back in the car. Techno got out of the way as Wilbur started the car, backed out of the parking space, and drove away.

As soon as Wilbur was out of sight, Techno flinched. Shoving his palms in his eye sockets, he hissed in a breath of chilly air. It had been a while since Techno carried the weight of Wilbur’s side effects for him, he almost forgot the anger it caused him when his mind wouldn’t shut up. He hated the feeling buzzing under his skin, urging him to listen to the voice in his head that pretended to be a thought of his own. He hated it, but he hated thinking about how often Wilbur had to deal with it more.

The difference between a normal intrusive thought and these, however, was the compulsion to actually carry out what they told him to do. It disturbed him in every way, even more so knowing that it was something Wilbur had to suffer through often.

Techno was snapped out of his thoughts by a bang, opening and focusing his eyes he frowned at the dent in the van in the shape of his fist. He didn’t even know he had walked back over to the van yet.

“I need to focus,” he muttered to himself out loud, looking up and making eye contact with a member of the cleanup crew.

“Hey boss, we’re all ready to go,” they said, gesturing to the rest of the group who were already huddling up in the van.

“Alright, can one of you drive?” He snapped, wincing at the aggression in his voice.

The person in front of him shrunk a little, nodding and hurrying off to the front of the van. He was startled when he barely felt any guilt, shaking his head and jumping in the back. The others acknowledged him with a respectful head nod and continued on with their conversation, something about sports that Techno had no interest in.

To keep his mind occupied and alert of himself, he focused on the painting of an emerald on the inside walls of the van. It was a nice shade of green and the detail work was simple, but it worked well for the symbol. He tried to avoid imagining bashing the head of the man in front of him into the wall, obscuring the painting with blood.

His hands twitched.

He put them under his legs and sat on them to delay the amount of time it would take them to wrap around the crew member’s neck. The shadow of his jaw on his neck as he dipped his head and spoke during his conversation was distracting. The fact his armored vest only went up to his collarbone left a wide, vulnerable space to-

“Hey man, you good?” The man asked, snapping him out of his thoughts and giving his frenzied mind a reason to look up away from his neck and at his eyes.

Everyone was looking at him now and he felt embarrassed as if they could read his mind, waiting for him to snap. “Yeah, all good,” he answered plainly, blinking and tapping his foot restlessly against the metal flooring.

The man nodded in understanding, leaning back. “You just seem a little out of it is all, we can change the conversation if you want?”

Techno smiled, probably way wider than he usually would. “It’s fine, I just need to focus on somethin’.”

The woman sitting next to the man was quiet for a moment before her eyes lit up with an idea. She stood, carefully holding herself up with the walls as she maneuvered to the front of the moving van. She disappeared behind the separating wall between the cabin and the driver and passenger seats.

Techno exchanged a confused look with the man across from him before he heard music start to play through the speakers of the van. It was something Techno didn’t recognize, he really only listened to music when he was with Wilbur, so that wasn’t unexpected.

It was a rap song of some sort, fast-paced and loud. The others recognized it though, as they all got excited, singing along to the lyrics as the woman came back with a similar smile on

her face as them.

The scene made him loosen up a little, centering his attention on the vulgar lyrics and the swoop in his gut every time the van went over a speedbump or over a pothole.

After that, the trip much more bearable and it made him grateful for the community his family had built within the ruthless reputation they had.

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To say the least, Tubbo was freaking the fuck out. Tommy got home at the same time nearly every morning. So he was running late for school waiting for Tommy to get home. Knowing that his friend Wilbur took him to work already pissed him off, but when he woke up and Tommy wasn't already stumbling through the front door half asleep... he was scared. When Tubbo was scared, he got angry.

It wasn't healthy at all. Maybe he could excuse it with his rough childhood, maybe his emotions were only ever acknowledged when he got angry. Something like that. Psychology was never Tubbo's forte.

What he did know was that Tommy was at least thirty minutes late and Wilbur's car was pulling up in the driveway. Tommy wasn't sitting in the front seat.

Tubbo was close to going upstairs, donning his vigilante suit, and melting the man's brain. But he resisted and just ran out to Wilbur's car, hearing him slam the driver's door shut after getting out.

“WHERE THE FUCK IS-“

“*Shhh!*” Wilbur hissed, putting his pointer finger up to his lips. “He's asleep,” he whispered, jerking his thumb in the direction of the back seat.

Tubbo slumped a little, anger still residing in his limbs with nowhere to go. “Why are you so late?” He asked judgementally, keeping his voice down.

Wilbur winced, glancing at his hand that was resting on the door handle to the back seat. Tubbo followed his gaze in confusion only to do a double take, eyes widening at the sight of his knuckles that were split open, caked in blood. “I went to pick him up and saw some man dragging him away by the ankle,” his jaw was stiff, looking at the ground. “I don't think I've ever lost control so quickly...” he muttered thoughtfully, glancing up at the faint sunrise before turning back to him again. “Anyway, he had to be dealt with, so that's why we're late.”

The way he spoke about it made a chill run down Tubbo's spine, wondering how much of the blood on Wilbur's hands was his.

“Tommy was pretty beat up when I found him so I had him heal himself. He’s been sleeping it off in the back.”

The pieces slid together and Tubbo felt a weight lift off his chest, rushing up to the back window of Wilbur’s car. Tommy was asleep, curled up with his hands held close to his chest. When Tubbo looked back at Wilbur, all he could feel was a wave of relief and respect.

“What’d you do with the man?” Tubbo asked, a morbid question in his voice that made Wilbur blink in surprise.

“He won’t hurt anyone ever again.”

Tubbo understood immediately, eyes flitting back over to the window. “Let’s get Tommy inside, yeah?”

Wilbur nodded, opening the door only for Tommy to wake up, weakly pulling himself up into a sitting position. Tubbo and Wilbur exchanged a surprised look before Tommy mumbled something unintelligible, trying to stand up.

Tubbo had a feeling he was going to be very late for school.

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When Techno got to the base, he wasted no time grabbing the man and dragging him inside toward an interrogation room.

The room he had in mind was bare of any furniture except for one measly chair in the center of the room, right below it was a drain. Brown stains littered the concrete floor, more concentrated around the drain. Torture wasn’t the only use for the creepy room, but with Techno’s recent escapades with assassination, they had been using it for... acquiring information more. So he was fairly prepared for what he was about to do.

The room was downright horrific, it was made to be that way. To inflict fear. But Techno was used to it. He had seen the room right when they bought the building, to say the least, they really fucked it up since then.

So when the man woke up in the middle of the hallway, screaming, Techno smiled. The others had offered to help him carry the man to the interrogation room. He politely denied, feeling airy on the buzz of rage Wilbur had given him.

The man had probably woken up because Techno was dragging him by his ankle, just like how he had dragged Tommy. Except the man was lucky the floor in the hallway was tile rather than concrete. But it did make for a fun combination of the man’s screams and the squeaks of his clammy palms sliding across the floor. If Techno was feeling more sane the sound would probably be grating to hear, but in the moment it was like music to his ears.

Taking advantage of the time in the van Techno had long since changed out of the regular clean-up crew uniform for his suit, which he was already wearing most of underneath. He cared more about practicality than dramatics, his armor was a dark, deep purple color, bulletproof and flexible for all the stunts he liked to pull. His mask went on with two crossing straps, making an upside-down 'T' shape at the back of his head. Beneath that was a light ski-mask-like cover that was the second layer of protection that covered the recognizable shade of his pink hair.

His boots made a heavy thump against the ground with every step, the metal on the toes clinking against the tile.

When he finally made it to the interrogation room, he had to kick the man several times so he would let go of the door frame.

Getting the fairly big man into the chair was a struggle, and tying him down was even worse, but he eventually secured him in place.

Techno got his laptop out, opening the hospital database one of the others hacked into for him. "Alright, what's your name?"

"Why would I tell you that, fucker!" The man spat, wriggling around in the chair.

Techno's impatience grew and he punched the man in the face, hard enough that his head snapped back with a pop. "Your name."

The man pressed his lips together and glared at him, shaking his head. Techno raised his fist again and the man flinched, blood dripping from his nose. "Jeremy! It's Jeremy!"

"Last name?"

The man kept his mouth shut this time and Techno rolled his eyes, typing in his first name and finding a few results. He clicked on the most recent file, seeing dozens of records. The latest one was dated only a few hours earlier. His expression tightened when he saw the doctor that attended to him.

Techno turned to the man, keeping himself in place so he didn't kill the man right there. On his file, was the lone word 'Addict' with no other context. After seeing all the injuries he had to have healed on his record, Techno understood immediately.

"How do you know Dr. Tommy Metro?" Techno asked, voice tense as he searched the man's face for the answer he knew already, but didn't want to acknowledge. The urge to strangle him on the spot grew almost unbearable.

Instead of answering the question like an intelligent person, the man perked up, eyeing the door. "Is he here? I'll tell you whatever you wanna know if he heals me. I have a cut here and--"

The man's words were cut off with him involuntarily breaking out into laughter, harsh and scratchy. Techno just stood and watched, arms crossed as the man's laughs turned into airy



wheezes.

After his face started turning blue, Techno relinquished him temporarily from the pain. The man's eyes were wide, petrified as he gasped in greedy gulps of air.

"Why were you draggin' him through that parkin' lot?"

"I was just- he started it I swear!"

"How old are you? You must be over thirty? Forty? ...Actin' like this... it's childish. Pathetic, really."

"I- I swear sir! He swung at me first! It's not what it looks like!"

Techno stared at him for a moment, then he burst out into laughter. It echoed in the room and Techno clutched at his stomach, shaking his head. Then his laughter cut off as soon as it started, apathetic and unimpressed. "It's not what it looks like, huh? That's funny because the *three* different security footage angles show *you* attackin' him first."

The man stuttered, his bottom lip quivering as he searched for an excuse or lie, eyes glistening with tears.

"You made it three yards before my brother intercepted you. Kidnappin' a *child*..."

He was crying, blubbing as Techno just casually paced around him. Circling around to stand in front of him, Techno squatted down, glaring at him.

"Do you know who I am?"

Closing his eyes, the man nodded vigorously, flinching when Techno stood up again.

"That's the smartest answer you've had for me all day," Techno huffed, his hands clenched tightly into fists. "If you know me, you must know the way I'm going to kill you, then."

The man shook his head, tears sliding down his cheeks. "Please *please* I- I don't wanna die! I promise I'll forget everything that happened here, just let me go!"

Techno snickered, picking up an axe that was leaning against the wall. "You know, you're really lucky Tragedy couldn't be here for this," he muttered, testing the weight of it in his hands. "He would be much worse..."

The man's wails grew louder and more dramatic, jerking his body in an attempt to move the chair. It didn't budge. "NO! *Please*. I'll do anything!"

"Have you ever heard the phrase 'laughter is the best medicine'?" Techno stepped closer, the netherite glinting under the fluorescent light. "It's a wholesome metaphor, and quite realistic in a way. Because like all medicine, you can *always* have too much..."

"*Please* !" He begged, sniffing and sobbing.

“Asphyxiation, cardiac arrest, stroke, strangulated hernia... the list goes on. I wonder which one will happen to you.”

The man squirmed and leaned back in his chair as Techno approached, his hand held out to make contact with the man to initiate his power again. “WAIT!”

Techno paused in his movements, amused.

“I have information! Information you would want to know!” The man gasped out, his breathing was already erratic, forehead lined with sweat.

“Oh really?” Techno scoffed, loosely pointing the axe at him. “What information could you possibly have that I would care about?”

The man looked around nervously, trying to avoid looking Techno in the eyes. “I overheard some nurses talking about something going on in the hospital-“

Rolling his eyes, Techno put his hand back out again.

“Wai- STOP! HEROES! HEROES WERE AT THE HOSPITAL!”

Techno stilled, his hand falling to his side. “Heroes? Why were they at that hospital? They have their own medical team at the tower.”

The man was shaking as he nodded profusely, relieved. “I’ll tell you everything I know- just don’t kill me. Promise you won’t kill me.”

Techno considered it for a moment, tilting his head down at the man. “How do I know you aren’t lying?”

The man shook his head, tears still spilling down his red face. “I mean, you’ll just kill me. There’s no point in lying now.”

For a few seconds, Techno stood completely still, fists at his sides. Then, he turned away and set his axe aside, leaning it against the wall. “Fine,” he said, taking in a deep breath and crossing his arms to prevent himself from killing the man by accident. “Talk.”

The man let out a sigh of relief, sniffing. “Okay- okay, well I was in yesterday under a different doctor, I can’t remember her name because I haven’t had her before. I was tryna get her to heal another cut on my leg, ‘pparently it wasn’t bleeding enough or somethin’ and she fuckin’ leaves the room an’ I can hear her bitchin’ to the nurse outside the door. Outta nowhere, I hear a bunch of movement and everything goes silent.”

Techno paced back and forth, following the story so far.

“I get up because it’s awfully quiet out in the halls to check, no one’s there. All the nurses and doctors are gone. I sit back down and I wait for an *hour*. The doctor finally returns with the nurse and they’re whispering about something. They sounded so... scared. So I got closer to the door to hear what they were sayin’.”

Pausing, Techno turned to look at the man head-on again, eyebrows furrowed.

“They were talking about how Mirage was at the hospital and he was interrogating every healer who worked there. They said Hazard was also there to watch them while he talked to people one by one, sounded serious.”

“Why were they interrogatin’ people?” Techno demanded, claspin’ his hands together tightly behind his back to keep himself from just beating the rest out of the man quicker.

“Well, today I overheard a nurse saying that heroes were looking for a rogue healer who had to work at that hospital because one of them healed Tragedy.”

Techno’s heart stuttered in his chest, eyes wide as he looked down at the man again. Suddenly his demeanor flipped, something desperate he couldn’t care enough to mask. “What else did you hear? Have they found out who healed him yet?”

The man blinked, confused for a second before forcing out an answer. “No, not that I’ve heard of. They’re still looking for them. I just know that today Mirage wasn’t here and the investigation has been put on hold for some reason.”

Nodding numbly, Techno turned away from the man and ran his hands down the sides of his head, thinking. “Is that it? Is there anything else you know?”

“No, I can’t remember anything else,” the man sighed, slumping in the chair. “Let me go now.”

Techno turned around, too annoyed to be smug. “I almost forgot about that part. Yeah, you’re not going anywhere.”

“What? I told you everything I know, I swear!”

“Oh I’m sure you have,” Techno took a step closer again, scrunching his nose at the foul smell the man emitted.

“You promised you wouldn’t kill me! HEY! Stay back!”

“You sealed your fate as soon as you put your hands on my friend.”

“What!? YOU LIAR! Mother *fucker* -“

Techno reached out and grabbed the man’s arm, immediately feeling a refreshing giddiness that was doubled by the fire of Wilbur’s unstable rage. “I have no moral obligation to tell you the truth. You are nothin’ but vermin, dishonorable and a pathetic waste of resources.”

Letting go of the man, Techno sent him into a fit of hysteria.

“If I were any more radical I would strive to kill you all, but I tend to stay realistic.”

The man coughed and gasped, trying to scream and fight through it. He jerked in the chair and doubled over himself as his face grew red.

“You only value yourself. I mean, you thought you could just kidnap a doctor all just to have your own personal healer, a lifetime supply. Not even I would stoop that low.”

The man was wheezing in and out scratchy laughs and chuckles, eyes wide and bloodshot. Techno just put his hands in his pockets, watching.

“I have no respect for you and I have no more use for you. So nothing is stopping me from killing you.”

The man didn't respond, he couldn't, but Techno stayed. He stayed and stared for thirty-two minutes and forty-six seconds until the man eventually, painfully died of a collapsed lung.

Techno left the room feeling strangely calm.

## Chapter End Notes

YEP ! you guys got the torture scene you were all anticipating, hopefully it held up to the expectations! i always hold back with gore and stuff so yeah lol

and i would like to take a moment to talk about the portrayal of wilbur's power/side effects here. i've kind of hinted at wilbur's more 'psychotic' or 'insane' side for a while and its a lil complicated but also not at the same time, yknow?

essentially, since wilbur has a very emotion based power, the side effects are all emotional/mental as well.

the symptoms of this are similar to some real mental illnesses, but it is not any existing mental illness. the reason for this is that i don't want to portray a mental illness i don't know enough about and misrepresent it bc most of the mental issues i write about are things i have or strongly relate to, wilbur's condition is something i made up that has realistic aspects and is a combination of side effects i thought made the most sense in relation to his power.

anyway, i thought i would just get that out of the way so no one who has a real disorder thinks i'm portraying harmful stereotypes or anything :)

SORRY FOR ANOTHER RANT EXPLANATION LMAO

# bruises that won't heal

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur tightened his hands on the steering wheel, his knuckles stinging in response. Then, without any more consideration, he grabbed his phone again and scrolled through his contacts until he saw the name he was looking for. He dialed the number, growing impatient as the phone rang and rang. The ringing stopped.

*"Hello?"*

Twisting his car key in the ignition, his car rumbled to life. "Hey Puffy," he said with a sigh, exhausted. "I'm going to be late for work today."

## Chapter Notes

hey guys im back! i moved the a/n i had in ch 15's place to the end notes here so if u didnt read that, its there

chapter title is a lyric from the song [No Surprises by Radiohead](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur was quick to react to Tommy's sudden awakening, leaning forward and grabbing one of his arms and slinging it around his shoulder. Tubbo mirrored him and they both started walking toward the house with Tommy clearly trying to fight off sleep.

The sun was beginning to rise and Tommy was swaying and stumbling on his feet like a drunk all the way to the front door. Wilbur was off-balance because of him, but he found it funny. Tubbo, on the other hand, seemed slightly bothered when Tommy would trip in his direction and he would have to lift him up again.

Once they reached the door, Tommy finally said something comprehensible. "I lik'd it bett'r when you guys hat'd each oth'r."

Wilbur laughed and Tubbo just shook his head, feigning annoyance. "I think he might have a minor concussion," Wilbur commented, shifting to carry most of Tommy's weight as Tubbo let go to open the front door.

“D’you know c’cussions are from y’ur brain hittin’ the inside of y’ur skull?” Tommy mumbled, leaning forward and blinking slowly.

“Either that or he’s in a half-asleep state from overusing his power,” Tubbo said with a slightly strained laugh, holding the door open for Wilbur. He struggled to get Tommy to walk in, so he just picked him up and carried him inside.

He made his way over to the living room and deposited Tommy on the couch, situating him into a comfortable position. It was in that moment that Tubbo spoke up.

“I... I have an exam I can’t miss.”

Tommy’s eyes fluttered shut and Wilbur turned to look at Tubbo who seemed conflicted. “Is he gonna be okay here alone?”

Tubbo made eye contact with him, opening his mouth only to close it a second later. “It’s okay, I’ll have Ranboo watch him.”

“I can-”

“Go to work Wilbur,” Tubbo said, probably more snappy than he intended, sighing and shaking his head. “You’re going to be late.”

Slightly taken aback, Wilbur stopped talking, eyebrows furrowing. Tubbo stared at him for a little longer until he hesitantly started walking to the door. Wilbur reached the front door and reluctantly put his hand on the doorknob.

“Wilbur,” Tubbo called, voice quieter than before. Wilbur turned to look at him, noticing his suddenly sheepish demeanor. “Thank you,” he said, fidgeting with his hands as he held eye contact. “For saving Tommy, I mean. I don’t even want to think about what would’ve happened if you weren’t there...”

Wilbur turned fully to look at him, staying silent to give him enough time to collect his thoughts. Tubbo’s guilt and anxiety were wafting through the room in waves.

“Maybe I misjudged you.”

Wilbur smiled, giving him a slight nod before opening the door.

He walked out and closed the door behind him, feeling a strange sense of relief.

When he got into his car he just sat there for a moment, processing everything that had happened. He hadn’t had an episode for a while and no matter how many he had, the feeling was always a surprise.

Just seeing Tommy fighting for his life, pure terror in every desperate movement, it struck something in his heart. It triggered a strong emotion that washed away his rational thinking, leaving an uncontrollable monster in his wake.

Tommy broke through to him before he could do anything too irreversible, which he was immensely grateful for.

Which reminded him of the attacker himself, who was most likely already dead at the hands of...

Blinking, Wilbur looked to his right and noticed he left his phone in the car, sitting in the passenger seat. It was face up, the screen was lit up. He picked it up and noted the several missed calls from Techno. He hesitated for a moment before tossing his phone back onto the passenger seat.

Wilbur tightened his hands on the steering wheel, his knuckles stinging in response. Then, without any more consideration, he grabbed his phone again and scrolled through his contacts until he saw the name he was looking for. He dialed the number, growing impatient as the phone rang and rang. The ringing stopped.

*“Hello?”*

Twisting his car key in the ignition, his car rumbled to life. “Hey Puffy,” he said with a sigh, exhausted. “I’m going to be late for work today.”

~ + ~

When he got to base he parked his car in the underground garage, knowing there wasn’t an accessible camera in the radius to see him enter.

He turned off the car, the music playing died with it. He sat in the silence for a moment, he felt off.

Something slapped against his window and embarrassingly made him jump, jerking to look to his left, only to be annoyed at the person on the other side.

Techno was standing outside his car door, arms crossed, eyes restless. Wilbur glared at his twin for a moment for scaring the shit out of him, until Techno grew uncharacteristically impatient and slapped his hand against the window again. The rings on his fingers made a sound on it that made Wilbur worry about the glass breaking.

Pursing his lips, Wilbur rolled down the window, narrowing his eyes once he heard the rhythmic tapping of Techno’s boot on the concrete.

Holding his hand out expectantly, Wilbur waited for Techno to put his hand on his so he could take back the rest of the unstable energy he clearly could no longer manage.

“No, I have it handled,” Techno dismissed with a wave of his hand, gesturing for Wilbur to step out of the car. He didn’t.

“Obviously,” Wilbur commented suspiciously, giving him a look.

Techno rolled his eyes and reached into the car, opening the door from the inside. “That’s not what I’m botherin’ you about. C’mere, it’s serious.”

The tone of his voice and the anxiety radiating off of him made Wilbur pause, eyebrows furrowed as he gave in and stepped out of the vehicle. Something about his demeanor changed Wilbur’s stubborn one, slamming the car door shut behind him as Techno speed-walked to the elevator.

Techno made it to the elevator and was inside with his hand on the buttons before Wilbur did, giving him an unamused look as he entered. “You’re so slow,” he muttered with a slight laugh to himself.

Wilbur just rolled his eyes and Techno pressed his thumbprint on the panel, waiting until it turned green before clicking the button that had a simple horizontal line on it. He paused for a second until a ding rang out in the elevator. He pressed the ‘1’ button, followed by the ‘4’.

They stood in silence when the elevator shifted, a slight jerk that they were both used to and prepared for. Then, the elevator began to descend past the ground level, going into the negatives.

“So... did something happen?” Wilbur asked, he couldn’t help himself. He was getting impatient to hear what could’ve possibly happened during the time he was gone, especially since Techno seemed so riled up about it.

Techno turned and gave him a flat stare. “I obviously can’t talk about it here.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes again and crossed his arms, watching the red numbers tick by.

After a long awkward moment of silence, the elevator pulled to a stop and dinged again. The doors opened up to reveal an open room with various weapons hanging on the walls as well as prototypes for upgraded suits. Ever since Mirage’s blade went straight through Wilbur’s armor and through his organs, their engineers had been working on finding something more protective, yet still flexible.

Wilbur walked into the center of the room where a few random maroon furniture pieces were placed around, courtesy of their father who said they were there because they ‘livened up the place’. He sat on one of the leather couches and leaned back, looking up at Techno expectantly after getting comfortable. “Well?”

Sighing, Techno sat down across from him and clasped his hands together. “You know that Tommy is being surveillanced, right?”

Wilbur nodded slowly, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

“Well, we thought that was as bad as it could get, but it seems to be the least of our worries now. Because I learned from Jeremy that the entire hospital is infested with heroes.”

“What?! Why?”



“ *Why?* ” Techno repeated, sitting up. “Because Mirage is obsessively tryin’ to find out the ‘rogue healer’ that saved your life!”

Wilbur’s eyes widened and his jaw dropped, sitting tensely now as his eyes darted around before meeting Techno’s again.

“Apparently, the investigation is on hold for now. But knowin’ Mirage he’ll probably be on it again soon, with his *full* attention,” he said, leaning forward and putting his elbows on his knees.

Wilbur blinked and looked around, mouth agape. “What do we do? We don’t even know what happens to ‘rogue healers’!”

Techno frowned sympathetically, feeling the same hopelessness as he was. “I don’t know. I don’t think there’s anything we *can* do. We just have to be prepared to save him and hide him here. As well as memorizing safe house locations if we ever have to go to Plan Z.”

Wilbur sighed, running his hands through his hair as he stood up. “Is there any way we could talk to him as the Syndicate? Maybe we can help him make a sound alibi or something,” he suggested, pacing back and forth.

“And risk being caught talking to him? That’d just solidify his guilt! We can’t and won’t get involved until we absolutely need to. Hell, Tommy might have it under control already.”

Wilbur stopped pacing and narrowed his eyes, turning to look at his brother with a suspicious glare. “You talked to Dad about this already, haven’t you? Because those don’t sound like your words.”

Techno pursed his lips and leaned back into the couch, crossing his arms defiantly.

“Oh come on Techno! This is Tommy we’re talking about! He saved my life. He saved *your* life! We can’t leave him hanging like this!”

Closing his eyes, Techno looked down at the floor, avoiding eye contact. “Look, after I snapped out of it I-”

“Snapped out of it?”

Techno sighed. “The guy! I had to watch the guy who attacked him die.”

Wilbur nodded slowly, he understood the feeling but it still didn’t help the annoyance at his stubborn decision. “See. I know you care. Why aren’t you wanting to help? Why are you giving up so easily?”

There was a pause before Techno responded, with attitude. “As I was trying to say. After I snapped out of it, I called you. You didn’t pick up, so I called Dad,” he explained, exhaling out of his nose. “I know I know. I was panicking, okay? He flew over and we talked about it. I told him what happened with Tommy earlier and he still thinks less involvement is the best solution. Then, he told me what to tell you because he knows how you are! When you get emotionally involved in-”

“Emotionally involved?” Wilbur scoffed, rolling his eyes again. “He’s my friend! Of course I’m emotionally involved! But aside from that, I owe him my life, Techno. I’m surprised you don’t feel the same.”

“That’s not what I was saying. I’m just trying to be rational here. We can’t do anything about it without further endangering him *or us* . End of discussion.”

Wilbur opened his mouth to argue more but knew it would be useless to bicker with Techno while he was sided with their father. He closed his mouth, turned on his heel, and stormed to the elevator door.

Techno stood, quickly realizing Wilbur was leaving in a pissed-off state. “Wilbur wait! You’re goin’ to-”

“I have it under control,” Wilbur pressed the button to close the door and watched as they started sliding shut before Techno could stop them. “See you at work.”

He saw Techno reach out for the elevator as soon as the door shut, stifling a laugh. He was going to come up with a better plan to get Tommy out of the situation he put him in.

~ + ~

*He didn’t know where he was.*

*The first thing he recognized was the sound of tree limbs crashing together and birds singing. The smell of nature and the feeling of grass beneath him.*

*A dandelion tickled his nose and he sneezed, opening his eyes to see a familiar face grinning down at him. Tubbo nudged his arm with his knee, dropping the dandelion onto his chest. “Tommy, it’s dinner time! Come on! We have to get in line before the big kids or they’ll take all the good bread.”*

*Tommy shot up, the dandelion fell into his lap. He blinked, feeling a little disoriented and warm. His arms were tan with a pinkish tint in front of him, a stinging pain coming from them as he planted his small hands in the yellow-green grass.*

*He wiped at his eyes, every motion taking so much effort. Like he was moving in molasses, bolted to the ground. His arms and face felt especially warm, almost dry. He groaned and Tubbo laughed beside him. “Yeah, you got pretty sunburnt. I told you to move into the shade but you said ‘no’! Look what happens when you don’t listen to me.”*

*Tubbo stood up and dusted his hands off on his overalls before offering him his hand, smiling at him in a way that hurt. He hadn’t seen Tubbo smile so genuinely in years.*

*Somehow, Tommy stood up to a much shorter height than he was used to. But for some reason, it didn’t seem out of the ordinary in the moment. Tubbo’s grin turned smug and he*

*pushed at Tommy's arm before taking off in a sprint.*

*"Race you there!" He shouted over his shoulder, running up to a tall building that seemed familiar.*

*Tommy felt something trip over his heart and he kickstarted his body, chasing after Tubbo. His feet were bare of any shoes, so he felt the prickle of every blade of grass on his feet, hearing the crisp sound it made with every step.*

*Tubbo made it to the door first, a large arch door that creaked when he opened it. Tommy was probably ten feet away when Tubbo giggled and closed the door behind him.*

*Tommy slowed to a stop in front of the door, feeling strangely delayed in his movements. His hand closed around the door handle and he pulled, but it resisted.*

*Eyebrows furrowing, he grabbed it with his other hand as well, pulling and pulling.*

*It was too heavy.*

*He screamed as he leaned his entire weight backward, a rising panic growing at his chest. He yelled Tubbo's name, readjusting his hands before letting go, opting to pound on the door.*

*Tommy banged his fists on the door, bruising them on the thick wood. His eyes grew blurry and he turned around, leaning against the door and sliding down to the floor.*

*He hugged his knees to his chest, sniffing and wiping at his tears.*

*Tommy looked up at the sky and found it was no longer a sunny day, but in the middle of the chilly night. There were no stars in the sky and the only sound to be heard was his sobs.*

*The cold sent a shiver up his spine, he tightened his arms around himself more and more, but it never felt safe enough.*

*"Hey, Tommy? Tommy, look at me."*

*His eyes felt glued shut, groggy.*

*"Come on, open your eyes."*

*His eyelids refused to move, like a weight was set on them.*

*"You gotta wake up now, you have to eat dinner. Plus your screaming was starting to scare me."*

*Tommy peeled his eyes open, fighting the urge to let them roll back into his head. He recognized the person looking at him, but it took a moment to fully process what he was seeing.*

Ranboo was knelt next to him with his hands hovering, staring at him with a mix of fear and concern. “Are you okay?”

Tommy tried saying something, but it came out in a jumbled mess of noises that didn’t correlate to words. Ranboo nodded understandingly anyway, standing up a little hesitantly. Tommy immediately noticed that Ranboo was wearing one of Tubbo’s aprons, barely reaching past his thighs, making Tommy laugh, though it came out as more of a cough. Under that was his school uniform which was comprised of a white button-up, hence the apron.

“Well, uh I made food for you. Tubbo said you like salad but I thought you should probably eat some protein too,” he trailed off, fidgeting with his hands.

Tommy hummed in appreciation, smelling food cooking. He went to sit up and took in a sharp breath, falling back into the couch cushions. Ranboo’s face scrunched up in sympathy, then alarm when the sizzling in the kitchen grew concerningly louder.

“Stay right there, I’ll be back in a sec,” Ranboo said, darting out of the room and into the kitchen.

Tommy laid there for a moment, staring at the ceiling. His patience thinned quickly and he decided he didn’t need help.

He tried sitting up using just his ab muscles, but his body felt so beaten and sore, even after his healing. Tommy used a different tactic on his third try, moving his arms behind him to prop himself up on his elbows.

His arms trembled under his weight and he hissed in a pained breath, pushing against gravity enough to lean against the arm of the couch.

Tommy sat for a few seconds, listening to Ranboo argue with the stove and burning whatever food he was making.

Looking down at his hands, what happened hit him like a slap in the face.

He was in pain and he was so scared, fighting for his life. He was too weak to overpower a giant, grown man. But there was someone else. A bright light blinding him, car headlights. His head hit the ground and he only heard a ringing sound and... and kicking. Someone being kicked, beaten.

He was alone until Wilbur came to just pick him up, and ended up saving his life. If it weren’t for Wilbur’s stubborn kindness he would be dead.

*Wilbur:*

Tommy looked around and his eyes locked on his phone. The only problem; it was on the other side of the room on a side table near Tubbo’s ‘crocheting recliner’.

He heard Ranboo turn on the sink in the other room, and with a sigh, he threw his legs off of the couch. Putting both hands on the arm of the couch, he pushed himself to his feet, immediately regretting it when his vision went dark and he heard his heart pounding in his

skull. He fell backward onto the couch again and huffed, taking a moment to breathe as his vision came back.

With annoyance and concern at the forefront of his emotions, he pursed his lips and stood again. He stayed standing until his vision came back into focus once more and his knees were no longer locked in place.

Tommy took a step, then another. His left arm was still outstretched, fingers lingering on the couch arm.

Slowly, he removed his hand from the couch and took another step toward the recliner. His knees begged to give out and his muscles were stiff, but he kept walking.

With another stumbling step, his foot collided with a basket of yarn rolls, knocking them out onto the floor. He cursed under his breath and tripped over one, losing his balance and falling onto the floor with a thud.

“Tommy?” Ranboo yelled from the kitchen, followed by the sound of a pan falling onto the floor and a yelp in pain.

Looking up, he saw the side table was on the other side of the recliner that he was now leaning his head against. Gritting his teeth, Tommy put his arms in front of him and crawled until he was right under the side table, pausing to catch his breath.

He blinked a little too long and his eyes threatened to put him to sleep again, little flurries of light dancing around his field of vision.

With one last burst of energy, he flipped over and sat up, reaching blindly behind him onto the table. A few of Tubbo’s crochet hooks rolled off the table and clattered mutedly on the carpet as he searched for his phone.

Tommy’s arm began to grow tired, almost feeling numb with it over his head for so long. He was about to put his hand down and try again until his fingers glided over the smooth surface of his phone.

He grabbed it and slid it off the table into his lap, quickly fumbling to open it. Tommy scrolled and found his contacts app, clicking on the one he was looking for and hitting the call button.

The phone started ringing and Tommy stared at it unblinkingly, keeping his eyes open to prevent the exhaustion from taking over.

It rang out again and Tommy felt a sinking feeling in his stomach, one that was all too similar to what he felt when he was in that gas station trying to call *anyone* and no one was picking up.

The feeling went away when the ringing stopped.

“Tommy?” Wilbur’s voice crackled through the speakers from the other end, clearly surprised.

Tommy breathed a sigh of relief, slumping against the side of the recliner.

*"Tommy?! Are you okay?"*

Blinking, he realized he should probably say something. "Mhm, 'm good."

*"Okay, that's good... why are you awake?"*

"Not tired," he lied, widening his eyes so they didn't close as easily.

*"If you say so... I still think you should get some more rest, you have a concussion. Wait. Where's Ranboo? Isn't he supposed to be watching you?"*

"Kitchen."

*"Alright. Is there a reason you called?"*

Tommy paused, thinking hard until he remembered. "Oh yeah. What happened?"

Wilbur was quiet for a moment, confusing Tommy more. *"I couldn't find you at the door you went in, so I started looking around and found you being dragged away by that guy. I got out and... I got you out of there and brought you home."*

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed, there was obviously something missing. "But... I remember... you were-"

"Tommy!? Tommy? Oh no. Where did you go?" Ranboo was in the room again, looking panicked as he whipped his head around the room. "TOMMY! TO-"

"Right here," Tommy called out, though it wasn't very loud it still caught his attention.

Ranboo's head snapped in his direction and he let out a relieved sigh. "Oh thank god. Tubbo would've killed me if I lost you. Wait- how did you get over there? *Why* are you over there?"

Tommy exhaled tiredly through his nose, seeing the moment when Ranboo saw him holding his phone.

"Oh."

*"Hey Tommy, I'm sorry but I gotta go. My break is ending and Techno wants help at the counter. I'll talk to you later, okay?"*

Frowning, Tommy leaned his head forward to look down at his phone. "Okay."

Wilbur ended the call, leaving Tommy staring at his contact. He turned off his phone and let his hand fall to his side.

Ranboo was already kneeling down next to him, catching his head from falling to the floor. Now that his mission was over he had no reason to force himself to stay awake.

"Wait- Tommy don't fall asleep yet. There's food..."

Tommy's eyes fluttered shut and he tried prying them open again for Ranboo's sake.

"Here, let's get you to your bed. You can eat it when you wake up."

Ranboo leaned him forward enough to grab him from under his armpits to pull him to his feet, slinging one of Tommy's arms around his shoulders.

Tommy was barely conscious the entire, painful process of walking up the stairs, though it was more Ranboo dragging him up them. But when his head hit the pillow, he was out like a light.

## Chapter End Notes

there it is!!! and if u want to, plz comment it motivates me a lot :) whether its a line/scene or something you liked or a theory/question or a hate comment, those r fun! anything ! it makes my day :)

here is the a/n i had here before:

Hi guys, for the past few days I've been thinking about this a lot, and I figured it'd be better to address it sooner rather than later. I want to try to keep this short, so sorry in advance if this is all over the place.

I found Technoblade's channel during a really low time in my life, I'm not gonna traumadump too much but it was pretty shit and I was super depressed.

Watching his videos and occasional streams were a big source of comfort for me, which led to me finding all the other creators and becoming more invested in the Dream SMP. A while later I read my first fanfiction ever; Passerine. Then I read my second, and third, and so on. A little bit after that I started writing my own, finding fanfiction as another thing that helped ground me.

The past week I've kind of been trying not to think about it much, but I did want to come on here and say that I'm going to continue writing my stories. I just might take a little while longer to get the next chapter out.

I can't make music or draw, I just write silly little fanfictions. With that, I am going to do what I can do to honor his memory in my own way. Which is continuing to write my renditions of his character in my stories.

As for this, I don't know if I'll leave this up as an individual chapter, I might delete it and put it in the author's notes when I update so it's not in between chapters for new readers later on. Not sure.

Anyway, your grief is valid, and remember to take care of yourself, it's easy to forget.

-mel 7/7/2022

# if i fail, i'll fall apart

## Chapter Summary

“Tubbo, this has to be the worst idea you’ve ever had,” Ranboo said, tightening the belt on his suit. Their outfits weren’t as sleek and professional-looking as Matchbox’s, but they got the job done.

Tubbo was already in his, adjusting his mask and the spiral lens goggles he wore. He found it made people get sick or pass out to his powers faster, as funny as it looked, it was practical. He ignored Ranboo’s comment, picking up the backpack that held a laptop and a few other supplies they would need.

“And that is impressive because just a couple months ago you had me teleport into a military base to steal explosives for you.”

## Chapter Notes

// general violence

im back hoes !! new pov in this one hehehe + new character and hints at two other new characters :) (IF YOU FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER YOU HELPED PICK THE NAME FOR ONE OF THEM :))

this chapter is in fourth place of wordcount with a wild 5,526 words. DAYUM !

chapter title is a lyric from the song [Oh No! by MARINA](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*Tubbo was sitting under a tree in the shade, he was confused. He wanted his mom and dad, but the lady told him that they passed. It didn't make sense because he had been watching the street past the fence for hours and they hadn't passed by once.*

*He got a bag of his clothes and was brought to this big building with other children, like him, they said.*

*They put him outside to meet the others, but he wanted to keep to himself. He liked the shade better rather than the scolding sun anyway.*

*“STOP! You’re hurting it!”*



*A loud, high-pitched voice cut through the air, catching his attention.*

*“Let it go, you prick!”*

*The sound of laughter pierced Tubbo’s heart in a way that angered him, he turned his head in search of the source. Two older boys were standing over another, younger boy who looked around his age, holding what looked like a small animal of some kind, laughing. Laughing in the evil way Tubbo knew only mean kids were capable of.*

*He stood up and stormed over, hands clenched into little fists.*

*“-such a weirdo! It’s just a frog you wuss! Go back to-”*

*“HEY!” Tubbo announced his presence very loudly and all three boys looked at him, varying shock on their faces. “Put the frog down.”*

*The older kids laughed again, exchanging a look. “Who are you? You must be the new kid.”*

*The one holding the frog opened his palm and the frog jumped out of his hand immediately, the blonde boy on the ground tracked it with his eyes as it escaped into the bushes.*

*“You’re gonna learn how things work around here real quick.”*

*Pursing his lips, Tubbo watched as he straightened his posture into an offensive stance, one Tubbo learned to recognize. He struck first, shoving the one who held the frog backward and he tripped over a rock, falling onto the yellowish grass behind him. The other boy rushed at Tubbo and he punched out like his father taught him, it hit the kid in the arm and he backed off quickly.*

*But the first boy had gotten up and caught Tubbo off guard with a right hook in the gut, followed by a punch to the mouth. With a wave of newfound anger, he struck back, practically breaking his knuckles on the boy’s thick skull.*

*The kid clutched his nose and both of them backed away, muttering to each other in anger before taking off.*

*Tubbo turned to the boy on the ground who was staring at him in awe, dirt smeared on his cheek over a bruise and the sun shining in his hair. He sat down next to him, catching his breath.*

*“That was awesome!” The boy exclaimed, a grin on his face that slowly melted back into concern. “Are you okay?”*

*Tubbo nodded, crossing his legs and wiping the blood from his lower lip. He was probably going to get in trouble for that, but he knew his dad would be proud when he told him he won a fight, stopping bullies.*

*Gathering his hands in his lap, he picked at the peeling skin on his knuckles with a grimace. That was something to get used to for sure. “Here,” the boy started, carefully taking his*

*bloodied hand in his own. A glowing light emitted from the blonde boy's fingertips as he traced the split skin on his knuckles. Slowly but surely, it healed back to brand new.*

*Tubbo's jaw dropped and he looked up at the boy who was giving him a slight smile.*

*"Thank you. You- you stood up for me, no one... I'm Tommy. What's your name?"*

*"It's no problem, Tommy. My name's Tubbo."*

~ + ~

Tubbo got home with a pain in his neck and tired resignation in his movements. Ranboo had called him in a panic during his passing period and hurriedly explained that Tommy had gotten up from the couch and walked across the room to make a call. That was it.

So of course, his patience was fairly thin by the time he unlocked the door and walked in. He took off his coat, ignoring how Ranboo immediately rose from the couch to start talking again.

"You hung up on me," Ranboo started, crossing his arms and then uncrossing them in a strange conflict with himself.

"I know," Tubbo huffed while hanging his coat up and dropping his keys on the small table near the entrance.

"We need to talk about this, it's a real concern."

Turning to Ranboo, Tubbo leveled him a blank look.

"I mean seriously, he is a walking red flag," Ranboo argued, throwing his hands up when Tubbo just stared at him. "And then earlier this morning? You said he came thirty minutes later than he should've in a car with Tommy, *unconscious* might I add, with blood on his knuckles and boots."

Tubbo sighed and walked past him, glancing in the kitchen to see it was perfectly clean, which was impressive considering Ranboo had almost burned the house down hours prior. "Where's Tommy?" He asked offhandedly, turning back to kick off his shoes and put them in a neat line beside the door with his other shoes. He didn't really want to have a conversation about... that... before he had time to fully process it.

"You..." Ranboo paused. "Upstairs in his room. He's asleep."

"Okay."

Ranboo pursed his lips and followed Tubbo up the stairs, making it to the top at the beginning of the hallway. He exhaled through his nose before grabbing Tubbo by the shoulder, turning

him around. “Wait. Listen to me, Tubbo. I looked at the security footage-”

“I know, I saw it.”

“*Listen*. It cuts off right after he gets out of the car and comes back by the time he’s already gone. *All* the cameras.”

“It was probably a coincidence.”

“A coincidence?! Are you kidding me right now? He’s so obviously *hiding* something! Why are you trying to defend him now? I thought you said your gut told you something was off about him and now that we’re given proof you just deny any possibility?”

Tubbo put his hands on his hips, raising an eyebrow at him. “My gut has had a change of heart. I don’t think we have to worry about him.”

“Don’t have to worry-? Tubbo! This man *hacked* into the hospital system to tamper with the security footage of the entire parking lot. Why would he do that unless it incriminated him of something like- oh I don’t know... *murder!*?” Ranboo argued, a high-pitched lilt to his voice that bordered on desperation.

Tubbo’s jaw dropped and he burst out laughing, eyes wide in surprise at his audacity. “That *has* to be the most hypocritical thing I’ve ever heard come out of your mouth! If that’s even the case, which is still highly unlikely, I’d say fucking good for him! The man deserved it anyway.”

Ranboo scoffed, posture unsure. “That’s not what I’m saying and you know it. We don’t know what he’s capable of and he’s spending all this time with Tommy... it’s concerning. What if he’s looking for another victim?”

“He’s not a serial killer.”

Rolling his eyes, Ranboo crossed his arms. “We don’t know that. *That’s* my entire point! If he killed that man, he could certainly kill Tommy. Isn’t that who we’re trying to protect? Isn’t he the reason we started this in the first place? To make a change so he can live a normal life like the rest of us? To fix the corruption?”

“I know! I *know*, Ranboo! I’m not stupid, believe it or not. I can tell that this Wilbur guy actually cares about Tommy, just like we do.”

“You can’t know that.”

“I can and I do. You didn’t see him earlier, you didn’t talk to him when he dropped Tommy off. If he wasn’t there today... who knows what would’ve happened to Tommy. He’s earned my respect whether you like it or not. So just-” A slight shuffle of bedsheets, carpet faintly crunching under someone’s foot. Tubbo cut himself off abruptly, earning a confused look from Ranboo.

Tubbo straightened up, slowly turning around to look down the hall. “Wha-”

He slapped Ranboo's arm to shut him up, giving him a wide-eyed glare before jerking his head in the direction of Tommy's room. Tubbo stood completely still for another moment until Tommy emerged from his room, leaning on the doorframe. "What're you guys arguing about?"

Ranboo stayed quiet and left Tubbo to do the explaining, shrinking back a little. "Nothing, just a misunderstanding is all. Have you eaten today?"

Tommy lifted his head and frowned, his blonde hair falling into his face, almost hiding the dark semi-circles that forever remained under his eyes. Tubbo sighed, glancing at Ranboo one last time before walking over and taking Tommy by the elbow to guide him downstairs. Tommy only shrugged him off once, determined to do it himself but caved in when he realized he was at risk of passing out and falling down the stairs.

Tubbo ignored Ranboo's lingering stare on his back the whole way down, reserving that conversation for another time when Tommy was not in earshot. He didn't want to make Tommy's life harder than it already was, restricting him from seeing a new friend would just be cruel. If Wilbur was really a bad person, Tommy would find out on his own anyway. The real question was if Tommy would care enough about himself to do anything about it.

~ + ~

Since it was a Friday night, Tubbo decided to hold off on doing his homework to put on a movie. Tommy ate the meal Ranboo had made for him earlier and quickly fell asleep on the couch during the movie. Ranboo on the other hand, stayed awake, glancing between Tommy and Tubbo every once in a while. Tubbo pretended not to notice and just enjoyed the movie.

Halfway through it a loud noise pierced the calm mood everyone had been in as well as making Tommy bolt upright. A phone alarm.

Tubbo reached over, grabbed Tommy's phone off the side table, and turned off the alarm in a matter of seconds, but Tommy was already up.

"Hey! You're not going to work tonight, Tommy," Tubbo said, catching Tommy's arm to stop him from walking away.

"I have to," was all he muttered in response, a frown on his face as he tried prying Tubbo's hand off his forearm.

"You need to rest. I doubt you'll even be able to heal anyone with the state you're in anyway."

Tommy just shook his head but didn't say anything.

"Come on, sit down and go back to sleep. I'll call you into work."

Tubbo watched him think it over in his head, clearly debating fighting him on this or not. Finally, he sighed and sat back down, getting comfortable as Tubbo walked into the kitchen to make the call.

~ + ~

The movie had been well over for a good half hour, Ranboo had also fallen asleep and Tubbo just stayed put in his recliner like an old man, deep in thought. The sky out the windows was just starting to get dark and the street lights turned on down the road.

A knock on the door interrupted the peaceful silence.

Ranboo flinched awake and stayed frozen in his seat, giving him a wide-eyed look when the person knocked again. It was loud and sharp, like someone was angrily slamming their fist against the door. The only kind of person to be knocking on their door this late at night like that had a lot of audacity. Which only meant one thing; police.

They hadn't gone out in a few days as vigilantes, so if they finally figured out their identities by a slip-up or something, the timeline was right.

Tubbo nodded at Ranboo and he immediately teleported away to properly hide their vigilante suits and gear somewhere more secure.

With a sigh, Tubbo stood and paused when he saw Tommy fast asleep on the couch still. Wincing, Tubbo gently put his hand over Tommy's ear and focused. A slight pop hit his own ears and he pursed his lips in a grimace. It was painless for Tommy and slightly uncomfortable for Tubbo, but now Tommy would be completely deaf and oblivious to whatever confrontation was about to go down.

Ranboo teleported back into the room and saw them both, suddenly purple eyes gliding over to the door. "If anything goes wrong I'll get Tommy out of here first thing. You answer the door, I'll wait for your signal."

Then, Ranboo crouched down beside Tommy near the couch, giving him one last nod before another chain of knocks pounded on the front door.

Tubbo gave him a thumbs up and walked over to the door, tense. The person slammed their fist on the door again right as he unlocked and opened it, shooting them a dirty look.

Then, the look shifted from annoyance to utter shock and anxiety. Stood in front of him was the proclaimed 'hero' Matchbox. He was in his standard uniform, a plain black long-sleeve shirt fit with a bulletproof vest, thick fireproof cargo pants, and heavy boots meant for combat.

The main identifier of his outfit was the black and orange bandana holding his black hair back and the similar fabric wrapped around his head to cover his nose and mouth, probably to

minimize smoke inhalation which he was apparently *not* completely immune to. His codename was also plastered on the front and back of the vest next to his symbol; a ball of fire.

So to say the least, he looked like an even bigger douchebag in person. Not that the interviews had been able to paint him in the best lighting either, he was known for his rash decision making skills accompanied with anger issues that were hard to cover up in the media. It was why he wasn't a leader, but a threat. It also made him a prime target for Tragedy, who took advantage of his instability often in fights.

After a moment of them both standing there, Matchbox with his hand slowly retracting from where he was pounding the door, Tubbo with his hands on his hips, Tubbo broke the silence. "Can I help you?" He asked, a snappiness in his tone that clearly surprised the man.

"Look I don't wanna be here either. I just need to verify that uh Dr. Metro isn't skipping town," he explained boredly, shrugging his shoulders. Tubbo was relieved he and Ranboo hadn't been found out, but was more concerned with why they needed to make sure Tommy was home.

"Why?" Tubbo prodded, narrowing his eyes.

Matchbox sighed, crossing his arms. "Look kid, go get your brother for me so I can check that he's actually here. Or get your parents. I don't have time for this."

Tubbo was shocked and he *laughed*, doubling over. "Oh, I haven't heard that one in a while, how nostalgic. *If* you actually looked, *his* name is on the lease. We're orphans and he's my roommate."

It was Matchbox's turn to be surprised, jaw-dropping behind his mask as his arms fell to his sides. "He's- you're orphans?"

"Yes. Now tell me why my roommate is being surveillanced like a criminal on parole?" Tubbo was uneasy, especially considering it was serious enough that they sent a hero rather than a police officer.

The man just stared at him, shifting on his feet. "I- how old are you?"

"I don't have to answer your questions. I know my rights."

There was a long pause and then Matchbox just sighed again, shaking his head. "Okay, fine. A few weeks ago, a healer saved Tragedy's life, which is a cause for concern. Mirage has launched an investigation to find out who the rogue healer is and he's deduced that it has to be someone who works at your roommate's hospital. Since he's registered as a healer and is from that hospital, he is a suspect. Happy?"

Tubbo's heart sank, but he managed to nod anyway, his attitude completely slipped off of him, dreadful. He knew Tommy was the one who did it, he was bound to get caught at any moment. And Tommy didn't tell him. "Well, he's in here asleep on the couch if you wanna peek in. I don't want to wake him though, he's very tired from a long week."

Matchbox gave him a sympathetic look and followed him in, Tubbo was grateful that Ranboo had been listening and must've teleported away to avoid questioning. He didn't want to have to explain Ranboo's situation as well.

They stood in the open archway leading into the living room and Tubbo gestured towards Tommy's sleeping form, his head falling onto his shoulder while he was slumped back into the couch. Matchbox frowned and quickly looked back to Tubbo, nodding.

They walked back to the front door and Matchbox hesitated on the porch, turning his head. "Stay safe, alright kid?"

Tubbo nodded one last time before he closed the door and Matchbox was on his way.

Ranboo teleported behind him and Tubbo turned around to look at him, worried. *Scared*. "What did I miss?"

"Ranboo, we're in deep shit."

~ + ~

"Tubbo, this has to be the *worst* idea you've ever had," Ranboo said, tightening the belt on his suit. Their outfits weren't as sleek and professional-looking as Matchbox's, but they got the job done.

Tubbo was already in his, adjusting his mask and the spiral lens goggles he wore. He found it made people get sick or pass out to his powers faster, as funny as it looked, it was practical. He ignored Ranboo's comment, picking up the backpack that held a laptop and a few other supplies they would need.

"And that is impressive because just a couple months ago you had me teleport into a military base to steal explosives for you."

"You don't have to come if you think it's too dangerous," Tubbo huffed out shortly, opening a drawer in his dresser and digging through his folded shirts. "But I'm going."

Ranboo's posture changed and he crossed his arms over his chest, shifting his weight to his left side. "No. I'm coming with you. I can think it's stupid and still do it."

Tubbo chuckled and finally found what he was looking for; a small USB that he dubbed a 'Bee Stinger' for the reason that it injected a virus into any computer to immediately access hidden or protected files, copying as much as it could hold in the process. The downside was that it's a one-time use kind of device and he only had one left, which Ranboo was quick to point out.

"You only have one left? What if it doesn't work?"

Tubbo raised an eyebrow at him before shoving it in the bag, closing his shirt drawer. “You think so little of me, Ranboo. My feelings are truly hurt.”

Ranboo just scoffed and rolled his eyes, tapping his foot impatiently.

“It’ll work,” Tubbo continued, zipping up the backpack and throwing it over his shoulder. “I just need to see what they have on Tommy, maybe mess up things to give him more time for us to figure out a better plan.”

“Why can’t you just do this remotely?” Ranboo whined, turning to pace while he shook his arms out anxiously. “Ugh, I’m going to throw up.”

“I told you already, their systems are completely locked down. It’s not like the shitty ones they have in place for the hospital,” Tubbo started, cramming the lockpick kit in the backpack's side pocket. “I need to access the private servers that are *in* the Hero’s Tower. We’ll be in and out within a few minutes at most.”

“Yep, I’m gonna throw up,” Ranboo groaned, dragging his hands down his face.

“You’re cleaning it up if you do. Just sayin’.”

“We’re going right into the hands of the people hunting us, Tubbo! Are you not terrified? What if someone sees us? The triple M’s might be right upstairs! Hazard could be walking by to- to grab a coffee or something then suddenly we’re a puddle of mush from our skin melting off our bones!”

“I’m not worried about that, you’ll teleport us out if anything goes wrong. Preferably before anyone melts our skin.”

“What if Voyager knows we’re coming and we teleport there and everyone’s already waiting for us!?”

Tubbo leveled him a funny look, shaking his head slightly. “He’s on the neutral side of all this. If he works for anyone it’s the fabric of time. He’s only partnered with the Hero’s Association because they can’t win a fight against him and it was embarrassing that he was evading them effortlessly for so long. If anything, he’d understand. Besides, no one’s heard from that guy in... a year? I doubt he’ll show up after that long just to set up a trap for *us* .”

“What if we go off the rails in the future and this is the moment they can catch us so-”

“In that case, they could just get the jump on us here.”

“But what if-“

“Ranboo.”

“...yes?”

“Shut the fuck up and teleport us in already.”



“Okay.”

He raised an eyebrow as Ranboo just stood there while Tubbo held his hands out, expectant. With a sigh, Ranboo rolled his eyes and grabbed his hands, inhaling and exhaling deeply.

“You’re going to get us killed,” he muttered under his breath before Tubbo felt the familiar swing of his stomach as they teleported into a dark room.

They both stood in silence and Tubbo listened for a sign of anyone. He heard nothing and slumped in relief. “Where are we?” He asked quietly, activating the night vision on his goggles.

He heard Ranboo shrug. “I just thought of the picture you showed me.”

Tubbo nodded, looking around and realizing they were actually in the server room. “Stay close,” he whispered, beginning to search the aisles for what he was looking for.

“I was planning on it,” Ranboo mumbled back.

Sifting through the giant towers of technology, various colored lights brightening the room, his eyes landed on a monitor. “This way.”

When they got to it, Tubbo slid the keyboard out of the shelf it was sitting on and the monitor beamed to life. He quickly plugged the Bee Stinger into the nearest computer tower and his virus was fast at work, code flitting across the screen as it silently breached the security systems in place.

Tubbo just stood there, rocking on his feet, when he heard a distant grumble. Like boiling water. Goosebumps ran up and down his arms and he whipped his head around in the direction he heard it, only to be jumpscared by glowing purple eyes staring down at him. He gasped and put a hand to his heart as he focused on Ranboo’s masked face.

“What?”

“You scared the shit out of me!” Tubbo whisper-shouted, lightly smacking him on the arm. Then, another sound. Some kind of liquid, bubbling and moving, almost like molten lava.

“I’ve been right here the entire time.”

Tubbo could hear Ranboo’s heart beating fast, a little more than it usually was, but he couldn’t hear anyone else’s, just the strange sounds. Another rustling, but squishy sound. “Did you hear that?” He whispered, looking back down at the screen to see the virus had run its course. They were in the system.

“Of course I didn’t hear it!” Ranboo squeaked, looking around nervously. “What did you hear?”

Tubbo’s eyebrows furrowed and he just shook his head, pulling up the HA database. “I- I don’t know. Just... watch my back.”

“Okay... okay,” Ranboo shifted on his feet, fidgeting with his hands as he looked around. Tubbo never really understood his anxiety in situations like this, he could easily grab someone and teleport them into a rushing river or overpower an enemy with his strength alone. But, Tubbo understood it now. It was *creepy*, not that they were incapable of defending themselves, it was more about the fear of the unknown that made it terrifying. “I’m teleporting us out of here the second-”

Heavy metal rattled from across the room and they both froze, Tubbo’s eyes stayed glued to the screen. “What was that...”

“I don’t know,” Ranboo whispered, putting a hand on his shoulder, buzzing with fear.

“Don’t teleport us before I give you the go-ahead. I can’t leave the-”

A loud bang made them both flinch, sharply followed by a disgusting squelching sound. Tubbo picked up the pace, finding a file named after Tommy’s hospital. Adrenaline spiked in his veins and he opened it, seeing lists of names and locations.

He found that they had a few things under Tommy’s name, he only read one before his attention was averted again. ‘ *Can’t recall his encounter with the Silhouette.* ’

A gurgling sound came from the small circular drain in the middle of the aisles, closer. Ranboo had one arm out in front of Tubbo, hovering and ready to grab him and teleport away. But neither moved when the drain grate bubbled a little before some strange liquid started seeping out.

Eyes widening, Tubbo turned back and closed the file, executing the scrambler that covered their tracks while mixing up the files and contents in them. It wasn’t a permanent solution, seeing as they had other Headquarters to re-upload the information again or get it sorted, but it would slow them down until then.

“Vertigo,” Ranboo urged, backing up. Tubbo looked up and saw the liquid coming out of the grate was taking form. It was like nothing he’d ever seen before.

“The stinger isn’t done, we can’t leave it yet, it has to copy the files.”

The liquid looked goopy and as more of it formed together it looked greenish in color, pulling more from the grate beneath it. Slowly, it started to take a humanoid form, and Tubbo was urgently waiting for the program to be done, wishing he had taken the time to upgrade his technology.

Suddenly, the figure started walking toward them, still siphoning the goop from the drain. Ranboo stepped more in front of him, his more confident side kicking in.

The slimy monster slowly shifted to a more human tone, complexion changing to that of a young man with blonde hair. Clothes formed on his body, suit pants and a white button up with suspenders, which made it all the more confusing.

“Who are you?” Ranboo asked, raising his fists.

The slime man just smiled, wide and creepy, and Ranboo punched him in the gut. Or he tried to. There was a strange slap sound and Ranboo was shocked when he couldn't remove his hand from the monster's stomach area.

The slime man's face turned into a frown and then he turned to a dense liquid again, this time, he was melted *around* Ranboo. From Tubbo's perspective, it looked like Ranboo was being swallowed whole and he gasped.

Tubbo watched in an instant as the slime man walked *through* Ranboo er- around him, and ejected him out the other side. Ranboo bent over and coughed, taking a staggering step away. The slime turned back to a human with a giant smile on his face again.

Face twisting in anger, Tubbo lunged forward, hands clamping around the slime man's head. He pushed as much power as he could through his body to quickly knock him out, but he didn't react at all.

"Is this some kind of human greeting?" The slime asked cheerfully, keeping the same composure as Tubbo realized his hands were stuck and it wasn't affecting the monster at all.

"Wha-"

"Well, hello strange human with swirly eyes! My name's Slimecicle but my boss calls me 'Charlie'," Slimecicle giggled and his own hands swung up to the sides of Tubbo's head with a clap before he melted around him like he did to Ranboo. For a moment, Tubbo felt like he was drowning, trying not to inhale any of the goop as it surrounded him and slid off.

He fell forward and caught himself with his hands on the ground, gasping and opening his eyes. His exposed skin felt sticky and grimy, and his goggles protected his eyes for the most part.

Tubbo was thoroughly disturbed, wiping a bit of sludge off his goggles and pushing himself up.

He turned around and saw Slimecicle staring at the computer screen in confusion, like he had never seen one before.

His now human hands found the Bee Stinger and he grabbed it, only pausing when Tubbo shouted at him. "Stop! What are you doing?!"

"I need this!" He exclaimed with a grin as he yanked it out, holding it up and examining it with intrigue.

"What? No! That's mine. You can't take that," Tubbo argued weakly, his body working against him as he let out a string of painful coughs. "Give it ba- back."

"It's mine now. Sorry!"

"Why? Why do you need it?"

"Boss told me to get it! But don't tell him I told you, he told me not to talk to anyone!"

“Wait- who?”

“I can’t tell you.”

“What- what are you?”

Slimecicle seemed frozen for a moment, like a deer in headlights. “I am a human of course!” He laughed nervously, closing his hand around the USB. “Just like you, I am full of bones and squishy organs...”

Tubbo was in complete shock, just staring in disbelief as Slimecicle took the Bee Stinger and popped it in his mouth before liquidizing into a puddle. He quickly rolled over out of the way this time as it slid by, carrying the USB in the middle of the mess. He was headed toward the drain.

Tubbo straightened himself out and pursed his lips, scrambling over and grabbing at the USB again. His hand slipped in the goop and his face scrunched up in disgust as the slime slid out of his hands and into the drain, taking the Bee Stinger with him.

“Fuck,” Tubbo huffed, pushing himself to his feet. “*Fuck!*”

He heard Ranboo get up somewhere behind him, dragging his feet with a similar expression of disappointment.

Just when they thought it couldn’t get any worse, an alarm went off and red lights flashed brightly in the room.

Ranboo wasted no time diving and grabbing him, teleporting back into Tubbo’s room. They fell onto the floor and Ranboo rolled off of him with a sigh, standing up and dusting his pants off.

“That was a nightmare,” Ranboo said, offering a hand to Tubbo, which he took.

He was pulled to his feet and immediately took off his goggles along with the jacket that went over his armor suit. “I feel... gross.”

“Me too,” Ranboo agreed, shedding his mask and gloves. “By the way, I told you so.”

Tubbo rolled his eyes while he took off his boots, letting out a scoff. “You were just scared, you didn’t tell me shit.”

“I totally did. I mean look, it was a complete bust.”

Tubbo paused, looking up at him before his eyebrows furrowed. “Not completely...”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I scrambled their shit for one, but I also saw something under Tommy’s name. I just don’t know what it means yet.”

Ranboo looked confused, but followed anyway. “What did it say?”

“‘Can’t recall his encounter with the Silhouette.’ I have no idea what that means though.”

Ranboo’s face scrunched up as he thought, but he made no connections. “*The Silhouette...* that sounds weirdly familiar. I just don’t know where it’s from.”

“Me neither,” Tubbo muttered. “Let’s think on it, I need to shower and so do you.”

Ranboo nodded, grabbing his mask off the floor.

Tubbo concentrated and listened for where Tommy was, searching for his breathing and heartbeat. He hesitated, putting his hand out to stop Ranboo from teleporting out. “What?”

“Shh!” He hissed, closing his eyes and focusing hard on every sound. He heard Ranboo’s heartbeat, reliably unpredictable. He heard the sound of the kitchen sink dripping, the humming of the fridge, the electricity running through the walls, and the wind hitting the trees outside. But he heard nothing else. *No one* else.

Tubbo threw open the door, went across the hall, and opened Tommy’s room to find it empty, his work bag on the floor where Tubbo put it.

He sprinted to the stairs, checking the upstairs bathroom along the way, and running down the stairs. Ranboo followed, confused with growing worry as Tubbo checked every room in the house.

Living room? Empty.

Kitchen? Empty.

Downstairs bathroom? Empty.

Laundry room? Empty.

“Tommy!” Tubbo called, cupping his hands around his mouth as he circled the house again. “TOMMY!”

“He didn’t go to work, did he?” Ranboo asked, joining him in looking.

“No, his bag is still here.”

“What about his shoes?”

They ran back into the entrance where Tommy’s hospital shoes were still in their quarantine box, but his white outside shoes were gone.

“Where did he go?”

Tubbo just stood there, equally confused with his goggles in hand. “I have no idea.”

## Chapter End Notes

btw i am sorry if the computer stuff made no sense im just pulling shit out of my ass idk hardly anything abt that stuff and im too lazy to look it up  
runnin on 3 hours of sleep and two pieces of soggy salad so excuse grammar mistakes  
plz an ty.

I WONDER WHERE TOMMY IS !!! lol ! (spoiler alert: not work)

as always, leave a comment if you want to, they make my day :)

# turn off all alarms and lie to me

## Chapter Summary

“Let me see your eyes.”

Tommy’s eyebrows immediately furrowed into confusion, taking a step back. “Tubbo, we’ve had this conversation. I don’t do drugs.”

Tubbo had the audacity to roll his eyes at him. “No, that’s not what I’m talking about,” he huffed, ducking his head a bit as he stared at him, face falling. “Tommy... have you been crying?”

## Chapter Notes

// suicidal ideation/implicit attempt, paranoia, panic attack kinda almost, smoking, drug mention

the cws make it sound rlly bad but its not the bad i swear.. kinda

chapter title is a lyric from the song [Gilded Lily by Cults](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

~ THIRTY MINUTES EARLIER ~

Tommy woke up alone. The lights were still on except for the ones in the living room. The TV was off and Tubbo and Ranboo were nowhere to be found.

He sat up fully, flinching when his neck protested the movement, aching painfully from the way he slept.

He blinked and his ears popped, like he had an altitude change while he was sleeping. Tommy just shrugged it off and stood up, stretching. It happened sometimes, he supposed.

Pausing, he looked around for any sign of what they were doing but he couldn’t find any.

Tommy went upstairs and stopped in front of Tubbo’s closed bedroom door. “Tubs? You in there?”

No answer.

Clearing his throat awkwardly, Tommy knocked on the door this time, wincing at how loud it sounded in the quiet house. “Tubbo? Did Ranboo leave already? I... you are okay in there, right? You’re not sick again, are you?”

Tubbo did not go to sleep this early, ever. He usually stayed up working on projects of all kinds, especially his schoolwork. It was also weird that his door was closed since he liked to keep it open to ventilate his room better.

When he got no reply a second time, Tommy sighed. “Alright, fair warning, I’m coming in now.”

He swung open the door, only to see that Tubbo was not in his room. So he had just stood outside the door for a solid twenty seconds, talking to himself for no reason.

Tommy let out a long, tired exhale.

Dragging his feet, he went downstairs and found his phone on the coffee table where Tubbo had put it after calling his work. He picked it up, tapping the screen. Dead.

With a sigh, he walked over to the recliner and plugged his phone in with Tubbo’s charger, setting it down on the side table.

Then, he made his way to the front door, putting his shoes on and opening it. He took a step outside and breathed in the change of atmosphere.

Ranboo’s car was gone.

Tommy couldn’t think of a reason why Tubbo would leave in Ranboo’s car with him, but it must’ve been urgent since they didn’t leave a note. All he could do was wait.

So, he sat down on the front steps, looking up at the night sky that had a hazy film over it. He’s always wondered what the stars looked like where they weren’t obscured by light pollution, where buildings and power lines didn’t block the view.

Tommy hated living in the city. He hated that the air never smelt fresh and the sky was always covered in a layer of smog. He hated how he never felt safe with the high crime rates and how every alleyway hid a bloodstain that had its own heartbreaking story. He hated the overwhelming smell of garbage and smoke burned into his nostrils.

But, it was all he knew. The city has been his home his entire life and it’s not like he could just leave. He had things tying him there, legally and emotionally. Tubbo had school here and it would be hard for him to transfer to a hospital somewhere more rural. People with powers like his were always brought to the cities where they were more useful, there was never much choice in it.

Tommy closed his eyes, thinking about how he probably won’t ever get the chance anyway since he was going to be arrested soon. It was inevitable, *Mirage* was on the case and everyone knew how seriously he took his work. He wouldn’t stop until he found him.



The thought brought an onslaught of emotions back at once, ones he had been trying to shove down. He had felt hopeless his entire life, nothing was ever in his control. Now after he finally got to make a decision on his own and use his power of his own volition, he was going to be locked away forever.

His mind flew from place to place, thinking about how it would affect Tubbo, who was financially dependent on him. How Wilbur and Techno would react to the news, if they ever found out. How Niki and everyone else at work would be able to fill the gap of his absence. How the rest of his coworkers would think of him once they all found out what he did.

He needed to go somewhere. He felt so *suffocated* at his home. Nowhere felt safe anymore, police could burst into his house and arrest him without further questions. With hero permission, they didn't need a warrant. His work was infested with heroes, everyone under constant, scrutinizing surveillance. The places he frequented were probably all closed even if he was sure there wouldn't be someone undercover, following him, watching him.

He took in a shuddering breath. He sounded crazy. His mind was swarming with paranoia. Hell, people *watching* him? It was insane. But Tommy knew it was true, he had been told as much.

His eyes slowly, carefully, glided over to the black SUV parked across the street. It hadn't moved since it first got there. The windows were tinted beyond what was legal and the symbol on the back was one he didn't recognize. It looked like it was trying to impersonate a soccer mom vehicle, but Tommy knew the people who lived at the house it was parked in front of was an old couple. They had no reason to buy a big black SUV like that, nor did they have the extra money to since they were retired. He knew all of this because of Tubbo, of course. Because when they first moved in Tubbo made it his mission to learn about all of their neighbors, excited to finally have a home and community to be a part of. He would probably have to move into an apartment far away from here. Tommy's heart sunk even more.

Now, Tommy just averted his gaze from the SUV out of fear that they would realize he noticed them. His eyes were dead set on the concrete in front of him, eyes blown wide.

What if they found the security camera footage from the corner store? What if they interrogated his coworkers more to hear that he came into work covered in blood that evening? What if they found out Niki had access to the security footage in the hospital? What if a pedestrian saw him running to the hospital in his scrubs without him realizing? What if someone else had seen him in that observation room? What if Niki or Sally told someone?

No. They wouldn't.

*Would they?*

What if they caved in and told Mirage? What if they could no longer take the weight of the secret? What if they realized he wasn't worth the risk? What if they were selling him out *right now*?

He didn't even notice he was crying until a hot tear landed on his wrist, glinting up at him under the porch light.

He couldn't stay. He needed to be anywhere else, doing something that took his mind off things.

Tommy stood up on shaky legs, wiping stray tears from his eyes. He didn't know where to go, but he knew he needed to get away, otherwise he would suffocate.

So he started walking.

...

He didn't know what possessed him to go this way, maybe stupidity, or a lack of self preservation, a mix of both probably. Whatever it was, he was back near the alleyway where he ran into Comedy and Tragedy, right before Mirage jumped out.

Tommy knew he should avoid being anywhere near them, but that wasn't why he was here. He paused at a familiar alleyway, hesitant.

He squinted in the dark, slowly able to focus on the shapes of the dumpster and trash bags overflowing out of it.

His eyes searched the alley, confused, before flinching when something brushed against his calves. Tommy looked down to see Clementine, a smile forming on his face. His surprise at her sneakiness was replaced by relief with the knowledge that she was okay.

He crouched down and pet her soft brown fur, noticing she hadn't had her kittens yet, though she had gotten significantly bigger. Tommy's smile fell little by little.

Clementine was clearly a stray, likely put out by her previous owner *because* she was pregnant.

He knew he couldn't take her in, though. He was financially stable, but he just couldn't, money wasn't the problem.

Tommy was bound to get arrested soon, ripped off the face of the planet without a trace. What would be left of him was the memories people kept of him in their heads, which too, would eventually fade. And he couldn't leave Tubbo to pick up the responsibility of a cat and several kittens. Without Tommy's financial support, Tubbo would barely be able to keep himself afloat while paying for school. Sure, he could live with Ranboo, but he wasn't better off either.

Tommy also knew that Tubbo wouldn't have the heart to give up the cats when he needed to, he would keep them and make sure they lived better than he did. Not just because he loved animals, but because it would be too strong of a connection to Tommy.

As much as it hurt his heart to, he stood up.

But, he wasn't done yet.

...

He made it to the same twenty-four-hour Pit Stop as last time, except now he wasn't as scared out of his mind and knew the way back.

Tommy opened the door and his presence was announced with the same distorted ding as last time. The man at the counter was also the same as last time, he was leaning back in a chair with his feet up on the counter, showing off the familiar intimidating boots that Tommy recalled internally naming 'skull stompers'.

His chin was tucked into his chest with his black baseball cap covering his eyes, he was wearing a gray hoodie and a thicker black jacket over it. Tommy would've thought he was asleep if he didn't have a lit cigarette in one hand, phone in the other. He glanced up at him from under his hat, doing a double take almost immediately.

"You're back," he said dumbly, moving his feet off the counter to sit up and lean forward, confused.

Tommy nodded, not really knowing how to respond. "Yep."

"What are you doing here this time?" The man asked, a weird expression on his face that didn't make any sense to Tommy.

"Um, I'm buyin' shit. It's the only place open this late at night," he responded with a shrug, trying to calculate what time it was in his head. All he knew was that it was way later than he was normally out when he would make the trek to work.

"Oh."

Tommy's eyebrows scrunched up but he didn't question the man's confusion, he knew it was probably because he should be at home, asleep. Asleep so he could wake up in the morning to go to school like any other kid his age. But, he wasn't like other kids his age, and he didn't feel like explaining that to the man and further making himself upset about the fact, so he said nothing and wandered to the aisles.

He walked around rather aimlessly, trying to look for what he had in mind while ignoring the burning eyes on the back of his neck. He didn't even know if they had what he was looking for and began to lose hope. Then, he saw it.

Tommy walked over to a smaller aisle, a small selection of animal treats sitting on the shelves. He looked at all of them and found the ones for cats, trying to decipher what made a *good* cat treat compared to bad ones. He decided to go off of the price, surely if it was more expensive it had more natural ingredients in it.

He picked up the priciest one, a little green resealable bag that had a cartoon cat and fish on the front, giant white letters with a flashy brand name. Satisfied with his choice, he took a step back from the shelf and made his way over to the counter.

Tommy placed the cat treats down on the counter with an odd look from the man. “How many cats do you have?” He asked conversationally, scanning the plastic bag with a loud beep.

“None,” he answered, belatedly realizing how weird that was, thankfully the man didn’t take the opportunity to make a jab at him and just nodded. Tommy just stared down at the gray counter, thoughts spiraling again. It felt all so out of his control, his situation, his unhealthy thought process, his emotions, all of it.

A familiar heavy weight landed on his chest and his throat closed up, hands shaking as he placed them on the counter, stabilizing himself against its cool surface. The fluorescent lights were all of a sudden so loud, buzzing in his ears in a way that almost sounded like white noise or tv static.

The fabric of the jacket sleeves touching his arms over the t-shirt he was wearing was irritating, overwhelming. The sweatpants on his legs were short on him, which left plenty of room for cold air to brush against his ankles, sending a shiver up his spine. He knew he changed into them after waking up and washing the hospital off, but for some reason the memory was fuzzy.

*No. Not here.*

Tommy blinked hard, squeezing his eyes shut and pushing his tongue to the roof of his mouth. Swallowing thickly, he sniffed in hopes of saving himself from a runny nose. His methods of preventing himself from breaking down and crying in front of this man began to work, air filling his lungs.

Then, a warm hand tapped the back of his freezing one, the burning contact snapped him back to reality and caused the sound to flood back to him. He focused in on the moment again to see the man leaning over the counter, standing now. His eyes were wide, the hand that had been holding his phone was hovering over his, uncertain.

Tommy blinked again and shook his head, clearing his throat awkwardly. “Sorry, uh... could you repeat that?”

The man slowly retracted his hand, hesitantly looking back at the cash register. “I said your total is seven forty-nine,” he said, eyebrows furrowed.

Nodding, Tommy took his wallet out of his jacket pocket, thankful that he remembered to grab his jacket in the first place, otherwise he would be at a loss. He grabbed his card and used the chip reader, typing his four digit code in with shaky hands as the tension rose and the terrible silence lingered.

“Are you alright, man?”

Tommy glanced up, but quickly looked back down, biting the inside of his cheek. He wanted to lie, to croak out that familiar answer.

He wanted to say he was fine, just tired. Then he would trudge back to where he came in the biting wind with his secret turmoil festering with salt on the wound, unable to scream out in pain.

But there was something about the fact he didn't know this man, and he would likely never see him again after this encounter. Like he could tell him because it didn't matter and he could just get it off his chest.

So the words left his mouth involuntarily.

"Have you ever felt helpless? Like some impending doom was coming and there was nothing you could do to stop it?"

The man seemed shocked at his genuine response, a thoughtful look forming on his face. "What do you mean?"

"Sorry, um. I don't know. I- well, I messed up big time and the consequences aren't pretty and they're gonna catch up with me soon. I just... I don't know it's just- um..." he trailed off, already regretting his decision to be honest and say something for the sake of getting it off his chest.

The man stared at him for a second, in something like understanding. It made him feel a bit better about it, though it didn't ease the guilt of randomly dumping it on this random guy working the night shift at a gas station. "It's alright, I get it," he said with a reassuring smile that looked uncharacteristic on him. "It's hard dealing with stuff like that, especially by yourself. If you can't tell me, tell someone you trust. That feeling of helplessness... will ease. Maybe they can help you find a solution and it won't seem like fate."

Tommy nodded gratefully, feeling relieved at his advice. It made sense and it was oddly nice to hear it from someone who he didn't know. "Thank you," he said earnestly, taking the bag he was handed. "Really, that means a lot."

Smiling a little, the cashier just nodded back, his right hand coming up to take a drag of his cigarette. "Have a good night, man."

"You too," Tommy took a few steps backward and turned toward the exit, almost at the door before the man spoke up again.

"And kid?"

"Yeah?"

"Be careful with strays, they might seem cute and cuddly and all but they're still feral cats at the end of the day," the man said, a strange sincerity to his voice.

Tommy tried to decipher a hidden message behind it, but couldn't figure it out. "I'll be careful," he assured instead of asking.

He left with a lighter feeling in his chest.

...

Clementine was waiting for him when he got back. He was quick to open the bag of treats and give her a handful, scratching behind her ears while she ate them excitedly.

Once his hand was empty, he skillfully picked her up in a scooping motion to avoid touching her stomach, pocketing the bag of treats. He began walking in the direction of the bakery, because every time he went he passed a cat cafe and an attached pet clinic. He had once thought about surprising Tubbo with a cat, but he had given up on it after more thought. Tubbo was busy, he was busy, they weren't home often enough to give the cat the attention it would need, etcetera.

Tommy was a pretty fast walker, so he got there fairly quickly, especially because it was cold and his fingers were growing numb with them out of his pockets.

When he made it there, he was grateful that he had been paying attention at least *one* time while passing to notice that the clinic was open twenty-four-hours in case of emergency visits. Which he saw displayed on a sign as he approached.

There was a cheery ding above the door once he entered and he almost did a double take when he saw the person at the counter was tall and had curly brown hair. Then, they looked up from their phone and Tommy took in the fact their hair was long and they were a completely different person than who he thought they were.

"Hello, I'm Eret! How may I help you?" They asked with an energy someone working the night shift couldn't possibly possess, looking at the cat in his arms.

"Hi Eret. So, I befriended this friendly cat a while ago and she's *very* pregnant. Y'know it's getting cold with winter comin' up and all and...well, I can't take her in but I was hoping you guys could?"

An easygoing smile lighting up their face, Eret walked around the counter to look at Clementine up close. "She is in luck! We have had space for more cats recently," they said, petting her head before looking back up at Tommy. "Does she have a name?"

"I uh, named her Clementine," he admitted shyly, feeling better now that he knew she would be somewhere nice and warm with food, water, and shelter.

"That's a nice name," they commented. "A stray, then, I'm guessing?"

Tommy nodded and Eret gestured for him to hand her to them. Tommy hesitated, looking down at the bundle of fur in his arms and hugging her. But he knew he couldn't keep her, it was better for her this way. Maybe someone else would come in the cafe someday and adopt her and all her kittens where she can live out her life to the fullest and happiest it can be. With that thought in mind, he mentally said goodbye, and gently handed Clementine over to Eret.

As they held her very carefully and considerately, Tommy knew she was in good hands. With a wave to Eret, he left the clinic without a second glance.

When Tommy got home, Tubbo was already outside on the porch waiting for him, angry. “Where *were* you?”

It was then that Tommy was reminded that because his phone had been dead he left it and forgot to leave any indication of where he was going. Tommy’s eyes just widened, mouth opening and closing after he realized he didn’t know what to say.

Tubbo grabbed him by the arm as soon as he got up on the porch, dragging him inside with a bit more force than necessary. He slammed the front door shut and locked it. Tommy noticed he had added another deadbolt. “Come on, Tommy. Where-” he paused, narrowing his eyes at him. “Let me see your eyes.”

Tommy’s eyebrows immediately furrowed into confusion, taking a step back. “Tubbo, we’ve had this conversation. I don’t do drugs.”

Tubbo had the audacity to roll his eyes at him. “No, that’s not what I’m talking about,” he huffed, ducking his head a bit as he stared at him, face falling. “Tommy... have you been crying?”

A flare of defensiveness crawled up his chest and he scoffed, shaking his head. “What? No. I’m fine, I don’t cry- never cry actually.”

Tubbo just pursed his lips, taking loud breaths through his nose like he was a bull about to charge. “Your eyes are bloodshot and your eyelids are puffy. Your nose is red and dry so don’t give me that bullshit when I’m trying to *help* you.”

“That’s exactly it, Tubbo. I don’t *need* help,” Tommy snapped, feeling the return of a cluster of emotions he couldn’t unravel. He knew it was useless to argue with Tubbo, especially since neither of them would back down. But he was just too tired and drained to care.

“Really?” Tubbo laughed, a terrible, crazed laugh that struck him to his core. He knew something. “Did you go to the train station again? Is that where you were? Is that why you aren’t telling me?”

Tommy’s heart dropped. He couldn’t know. He couldn’t know that he has been recently, debating, making a pros and cons list in his head, one side heavily outweighing the other.

“I mean- seriously Tommy. You kept telling me- assuring me you were fine and- and you wouldn’t do anything like that again and...” he paused his rambling to take a deep breath, gesturing wildly as he paced the room. “I go run an errand with Ranboo and I come back- the door was *unlocked*. I thought someone broke in here and took you! It’s not that crazy because- well you’re a doctor surely there’s some creepy fucking- fucking healer kidnapping ring with all the shit going on. All the fights and violence.

“So I looked everywhere. I searched this house like you’d be hiding in here somewhere. I sent Ranboo out to search nearby in his car and then I looked around in your room to see if there was any sign or something you left to give me a clue...”

Tommy felt nauseous, heart beating in his ears.

“Then I found your will. You updated it yesterday, Tommy. *Yesterday!* Why? Why would you do that unless you thought you were going to die? *Knew* you were going to be dead soon?”

“I was just...” he trailed off. He didn’t know what to say because Tubbo was right. He was right about his will and he was at the train station just yesterday.

Tubbo just stared at him, heartbroken while trying to stay mad. “Look Tommy, I know you’re under a lot of stress right now and you think you’re all alone but you’re not. So *please* tell me what’s going on with you.”

He didn’t know what to do. He really wanted to tell Tubbo, he really did. It was extremely hard to keep it to himself and everyday his reserve chipped more and more. Tommy even thought about the gas station cashier’s advice about telling someone he trusted. But it wasn’t that he didn’t trust Tubbo, he just couldn’t tell him.

He thought about how much Tubbo would worry and his throat closed up. It would be so much unnecessary worry because there’s nothing he can do about his situation either. He won’t submit Tubbo to his same torment.

“I’m fine, Tubbo, really,” he lied, the words like ash on his tongue. “I just needed some air and it’s just cold out.”

Tubbo pursed his lips, hands balled up in fists at his sides, not that he would ever hit Tommy, but the anger was clear.

“Look, I was just feeding stray cats,” Tommy took out the bag of cat treats out of his pocket, tossing them to Tubbo, who quickly caught them and looked them over. “I just updated my will because I moved some stuff around, okay? Don’t worry about me, Tubbo.”

Tubbo still looked like he was going to throw something at his head, but his confidence was slowly chipping away. Tommy felt sick. “But, I tracked your card... you went to the train station yesterday.”

Tommy swallowed thickly, schooling a thoughtful look on his face, then surprise. “Right, yeah, Wilbur also works at a music shop downtown, I went to visit him there.”

“Oh,” was all Tubbo said, confused and full of suspicion as he stared at him, trying to figure him out. “There isn’t anything going on at work stressing you out?”

Tommy crossed his arms, stomach acid itching to crawl up his throat. “Why would there be?”

Tubbo’s eyes narrowed, shifting his weight onto one foot. “Because Matchbox came here to make sure you hadn’t skipped town. Is there something you aren’t telling me?”



Tommy waved his hand dismissively, giving himself time to recover from the shocking blow to his lungs the words inflicted. He didn't know about that, but he should've expected it. "Oh that? Some rogue doctor healed Tragedy near the hospital, so they're investigating it. They'll find whoever did it, though, so it won't be an annoyance much longer."

It was a half-truth, Tommy supposed, it wasn't like he outright said he didn't do it, he just left that part out. Tubbo sighed in relief, almost defeated at the same time. "I'm sorry, Tommy. I should've believed you the first time."

There was a moment where Tubbo stared at him a few seconds longer, like he was waiting for him to say something. Waiting for him to fess up, maybe, but Tommy was stubborn, especially about this. Even though Tubbo's words stung, he forced out one last reassurance. "It's alright, I know you worry."

Pausing, Tubbo pursed his lips and nodded, turning around to head upstairs. Waiting to hear his bedroom door shut, Tommy went up to his own room, a pool of guilt festering in his gut.

~ + ~

Tommy woke up with a headache, as he did most days, but this was different from the usual cause.

With a groan, he sat up and rubbed at his eyes. He didn't want to get up, but he had to or else Tubbo would get suspicious again. That was the last thing he needed.

He got dressed and ran his hands through his hair a few times, showering before he went to bed last night did most of the work for him. With his curly hair it was impossible to brush it without ruining it, so he just hardly ever did.

He transferred his wallet to the back pocket of his jeans after getting hit with the smell of cigarette smoke that lingered on his jacket. Tossing it aside to wash later, Tommy made his way downstairs.

Tubbo was in the kitchen, seemingly cleaning up from cooking. "Good morning," he said, not looking up at Tommy as he entered the kitchen.

"G'morning," he parroted back, looking at the time on the stove to see it was getting close to noon.

"You're up early," Tubbo commented, washing his hands in the sink.

Tommy straightened his posture to look as put-together as he could, clearing his throat so he didn't sound as tired as he was. "I guess I am."

"Well, at least now you can eat your food while it's still warm," Tubbo turned and handed him a plate that had two pieces of toast with an egg on each of them.

Tommy gratefully took the plate with a quiet “thank you,” trying to ease the tension in the air.

“Have something to do today?”

“Uh yeah, I’m gonna go see Wilbur, maybe I can convince him to give me a ride to the bank.”

The conversation was dull, boring at best, but it was better than the glares and cold shoulders that surely would’ve come out of any other argument.

Tubbo eventually left the room, probably because he already ate, and Tommy was left in thoughtful silence. He sat trying to think of anything else, examining the room.

After he ate, he cleaned up his plate and put his shoes on, focusing on everything he did to keep from breaking down again.

Then he left for the bakery and tried to ignore the hole in his heart.

## Chapter End Notes

he just went on a walk guys!!! i wonder if yall will have a diff perspective of tubbo after last chapter, seeing the worry firsthand from his pov, to tommys pov now 🍆

+reminder that tubbo is not a therapist and is like 16 and is just scared and upset with his friend, hes trying his best guys, really

anyway this chapter is kinda in a smaller timeframe than i had in mind but the next scene didn't really match the vibe/flow so i just moved it for next chapter

# take another drag turn me to ashes

## Chapter Summary

As he raised the cigarette to his lips again he heard the door open and he winced internally, mentally preparing himself for Puffy's tired sigh or Techno's disappointed scoff.

Faster than he could've predicted, a hand came down and slapped his hand, knocking the cigarette from his fingers. It fell to the ground and he watched as a familiar white shoe stomped down on it, putting it out.

Frozen, Wilbur looked up to meet Tommy's eyes, a scowl on his face.

## Chapter Notes

// smoking, violence/blood

hey guys im back again :) its been two months ik but this is a fun silly chapter! just crimeboys having a grand ole time :). wilbur pov >:).

AND WE ARE ALMOST AT 100K HITS WHICH IS INSANE TY GUYS FOR ALL THE SUPPORT AAA

chapter title is a lyric from the song [Diet Mountain Dew by Lana Del Rey](#) in honor of her being my top artist this year hehe

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur stared at the grimy brick wall across from him, mind continuously racing. He was at a loss for what to do. He just felt helpless and guilty. Any solution he came up with would end up messy and were plans neither Techno or his father would agree to.

It had been eating away at him since he found out that Mirage was trying to figure out who healed him that day, giving him inconsistent flushes of anxiety. Because it was only a matter of time before he found out it was Tommy. Then, Wilbur *really* wouldn't know what to do.

He looked down at the cigarette in his right hand, lighter in the other. He hadn't smoked since high school, but he remembered how much it settled the anxiety, the roaring in his ears telling him it was all his fault. That he had already ruined everything and there was nothing he could do to fix it.

Sighing, he lit the cigarette, putting the lighter away as he put it to his lips. Taking a long drag, he scrunched his nose up at the mysterious stain on the concrete in front of him. It hadn't been there the day before, but the alleyway was fairly active, so he wouldn't be surprised if someone had spilled something recently.

Wilbur blew a plume of smoke out of his mouth and coughed a little, he almost had forgotten how much he hated the taste and the itching in his lungs. Though, his disgust was momentarily overpowered by the calm he felt, letting his shoulders drop for the first time since he woke up.

Usually during his break he would go a few doors down for something to eat, but he didn't feel hungry, so he went to a nearby gas station instead. So, here he was, sitting outside on the back step of Puffy's Pastries, hoping that Techno didn't decide to come out to check on him.

It wasn't like he was afraid of getting caught. He knew Techno would only offer his obvious disappointment and maybe a passive aggressive jab if he was in the mood, not take any actual action. But, Wilbur would just rather spare himself the taxing interaction.

He took another drag and leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, examining the smushed trash on the ground. The stress he had been feeling felt like it was never there, like a breath of fresh air. Ironic.

It was almost... peaceful.

As he raised the cigarette to his lips again he heard the door open and he winced internally, mentally preparing himself for Puffy's tired sigh or Techno's disappointed scoff.

Faster than he could've predicted, a hand came down and slapped his hand, knocking the cigarette from his fingers. It fell to the ground and he watched as a familiar white shoe stomped down on it, putting it out.

Frozen, Wilbur looked up to meet Tommy's eyes, a scowl on his face. He was completely shocked, he didn't think Tommy would come over yet considering he stayed home from work to rest.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Eyebrows furrowing, Wilbur leaned back and glanced up at Tommy before he looked away again. He couldn't get a read on his emotion from the distance between them and he felt a kind of shame rising in him. "Um... I'm on my break?"

Tommy rolled his eyes. "No, I mean what do you think you're doing *poisoning* yourself?"

"Oh... that. Right, I was- well."

"You were..?" Tommy prompted, raising his eyebrows and widening his eyes at him. In this moment he truly looked like the disappointed doctor he was.

"Look, I was just trying to de-stress, you know? I remembered it helps..."

Tommy's expression softened a bit and he sat down next to him, crossing his arms. "It doesn't help the stress, Wil. It's an illusion, nicotine withdrawals give you anxiety, smoking temporarily calms it," he explained with a sigh, looking up at the wall. "It's just like the government."

Wilbur was caught off guard, smiling a bit as he looked over at Tommy. "It's... like the government?"

"Yeah, they give you illnesses to sell you the cure."

Wilbur laughed a bit, coughing into his elbow as it rattled his now irritated throat.

Tommy frowned again. "How many have you had?"

"Just one."

Nodding, Tommy reached into his messenger bag and pulled out a pack of gum, fairly new. "Let's trade then."

"Is my breath already that bad?"

Tommy smiled and ignored his question, hands out, one with the pack of gum and the other empty. "Chewing gum should help keep your mind off it for the most part right now."

Pursing his lips, Wilbur reached into his trench coat pocket and took out the new pack of cigarettes he had bought earlier that morning, handing it over and taking the gum in replacement. He took one out and popped it in his mouth, watching as Tommy stood up and threw the cigarettes into a nearby dumpster.

"What are you stressed about?"

Wilbur paused, eyes gliding to the ground again as Tommy sat back down beside him. Obviously he couldn't tell Tommy the real reason why he was stressed, so instead he just shrugged.

"I mean- you can tell me if you want, I don't wanna pry."

Waving it off, Wilbur just shrugged. "Oh nothing really, just... school..."

Eyebrows furrowing, Tommy turned to look at him. "You're still in school?"

"Hey, I'm not that old. But no, I'm not anymore, just still paying it off."

"I see," Tommy hummed, nodding. "What'd you major in anyway?"

Wilbur grinned a little. "Political science."

Tommy barked out a laugh and Wilbur couldn't help but join in. "I should've known you'd major in something pretentious like that. What a prick you must've been. I mean, what was your reasoning anyway?"

Wilbur's smile faded off with his laugh, fidgeting with the pack of gum. "Well, I was hoping I could be an activist of some kind. Make a change. Clearly that fell through though, here I am, the bakery boy."

He elbowed Tommy a bit in an attempt to lighten it up with their inside joke, but he only paused for a moment before offering him a faint smile. "Maybe you can still make a change."

Wilbur let out a slight laugh, only to realize Tommy was being serious. "Maybe."

There was a long pause where both of them seemed to be deep in their own minds, though Wilbur could take a vague look into Tommy's with his emotions. As soon as a cloud of dread, fear, and sadness started to form around Tommy, Wilbur snapped out of his own thoughts so he could offer his support. He knew why Tommy was feeling that way, after all.

"Are you okay, Tommy?"

Tommy turned to look at him with a confused look, clearly surprised at his abrupt question. "Yes..?"

"You sound unsure," Wilbur noted, turning toward him with a tilt of his head.

Tommy shrugged, giving him a suspicious look.

"I'll always be here if you need to talk... or need help. For any reason at all," he assured, smiling a little.

"What do you mean..?"

Tommy's question caught him off guard and his brows pinched together, straightening his posture. "What do you mean 'what do you mean'?"

A long stretch of silence fell over them before Tommy answered. "I was just wondering where it all came from."

"You just seem a bit off today, I want you to know I'm here for you."

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, lifting his chin. "How so?"

"How so'..?"

"How have I been off?"

"I don't know how to explain it," Wilbur laughed nervously, increasingly worried that his cover had been blown. "That's why I asked if you were okay."

Tommy wasn't convinced, crossing his arms and looking away for a moment before making eye contact again. "Did Tubbo say something to you?"

Eyebrows furrowing, Wilbur held in a relieved sigh, but still had no clue what he was talking about. "Huh? What?"

“Has he told you anything?”

“About?”

Tommy paused, reassessing him with another layer of confusion. “My... past?”

“I haven’t talked to him since I dropped you off,” Wilbur explained, now intrigued. “What about your past?”

Eyes widening, Tommy shook his head. He turned and faced the wall in front of them, dragging his hands down his face. “Nothing... nothing. I’m-” he sighed. “I’m just being paranoid.”

“Oh,” Wilbur said dumbly, putting the pack of gum in his pocket so he would stop fidgeting with it more. “Well, like I said. I’m right here if you want to talk about it or... need any help.”

Tommy nodded thoughtfully, looking at the ground. Then, his head jerked back up and his emotions rippled like a giant rock was just thrown into them. “Actually,” he started quietly, outwardly calm compared to the hurricane in his mind. “There is something you can help me with.”

Surprised he was actually asking for help, Wilbur nodded to prompt him to continue.

“I need a ride to the bank.”

Wilbur sighed, feigning disappointment.

“What? Not exciting enough for you?” Tommy laughed, bumping shoulders with him.

“Yeah, I was expecting you were gonna ask me to be the getaway driver for a robbery or something.”

Tommy grinned. “Who said I wasn’t?”

Caught off guard, Wilbur snorted, which made Tommy laugh even more. “After my shift,” he said, shaking his head with a lingering smile on his face.

“Crime waits for no one, Wilbur. What if all the money is gone by then?”

“Why would the money be gone?”

“Exactly.”

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“Wha- that doesn’t even make any sense.”

Tommy stretched his legs out in front of him, crossing his arms. “It does, you’re just not on the same brain wave as me.”

“Don’t you mean wavelength?”

“I said what I said.”

Wilbur was about to prod further before the door to the bakery opened and Techno was standing before them, covered in flour and fuming in his usual aura of disdain and spite. There was a scowl on his face, sharply glaring at him through the white powder on his eyelashes.

“Wilbur. The flour goes on the bottom shelf for a reason.”

Barking out a laugh he could no longer hold in, Wilbur stood up. “It fell on you?”

“No, I covered myself in flour on purpose,” Techno snarked sarcastically, wiping his hand off on Wilbur’s shoulder. “You’re helping me clean this mess up.”

Wilbur’s face scrunched up and he slapped Techno’s hand away, but it was too late. “Ugh, fine,” he groaned, looking over at Tommy who was also standing now. “Sorry, Tommy. Want to come in for a coffee or something?”

Shrugging noncommittally, Tommy followed them back inside.

“I can’t believe you got so much flour on you,” Wilbur snickered, trailing after Techno into the kitchen while Tommy split off to his booth.

“You put an *open* bag of heavy flour in the top cabinet,” he scoffed, leading him to the mess. “Now, I need to get the flour off my face so I don’t scare the customers.”

Wilbur grabbed a washrag from the sink and smiled. “I’m sure they wouldn’t have noticed a difference.”

“Oh shut up,” he huffed, rolling his eyes. “You’re paler than me.”

“Not true.”

“Whatever, Wilbur.”

The door to the bathroom opened and closed and Wilbur was alone in the kitchen, since Puffy was probably taking over for Techno at the counter.

Wilbur began to clean up the mess, thinking about what Tommy had said earlier. Maybe he *could* make a change.



“What song is this one?” Tommy’s voice was quiet under the sound of the music playing and the wind in his ears. The windows of his car were open because the evening was a little warmer than it had been recently. He wanted to take advantage of the atmosphere as much as he could before winter took over and the slight cold became a painful chill.

“Learn to Fly by Foo Fighters,” Wilbur answered, tapping his hands on the steering wheel to the beat.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Tommy’s eyebrows scrunch up as he muttered the name under his breath, trying to put it in his memory.

“I can send you my playlist later if you want,” he offered, a sense of relief and excitement permeating from the passenger seat.

“Sure,” Tommy grinned, humming along since he didn’t know the lyrics.

The sun is going to set soon, Wilbur noted. Tommy’s bank just had to be the one in the center of the busy city, mainly used by upper class citizens.

He turned down the music and rolled up the windows when they got nearby, going slower to avoid accidentally hitting someone.

This bank was one of the only banks his family avoided robbing, as much as they loved taking money from the rich, this bank had a lot more security. Plus, they didn’t keep that much physical cash in the bank itself to prevent robberies.

Because when they weren’t swindling deals with other villain families, they were broke. People like Tommy, with useful abilities, were given an upper hand in the system. While people with abilities deemed not ‘useful’ in the workforce, like Wilbur’s parents, had to pick up multiple jobs to scrape enough together for dinner. Let alone paying bills and taxes.

Wilbur can’t remember a time when they weren’t struggling to pass by, since he only started retaining memories just a few years before his parents left the Hero Institution. Wilbur remembered when he first developed his abilities, he thought of how he could use them to get a good job. He could be a psychologist or therapist, he could help people and support his family. His father didn’t allow it, he registered both him and his brother as powerless, and that was the end of the story.

But crime was never off the table. Even with two jobs, Wilbur still doesn’t make enough to afford his own place.

Wilbur’s thought process was interrupted when he had to slam on the brakes, scoffing when a car swerved out in front of him at the last possible second to get in the turn lane. Wilbur slammed his palm on the horn while the other car roared loudly when the driver stepped on the accelerator. “What a prick,” he huffed, glancing at Tommy’s whose eyes were wide, hands on the dashboard. “Sorry, I should’ve seen him sooner.”

Tommy shook his head, letting his hands fall to his sides. “No, it’s not your fault. This area is full of assholes like that. It just caught me off guard.”

Nodding, Wilbur found the bank and began looking for a spot to park. Wilbur looked over at Tommy again to find his eyebrows scrunched up, staring off in space. But most overwhelmingly, a wave of morbid disturbance.

Wilbur found a parking spot further down the road, since this part of the city had little to no actual parking lots. When he stopped the car he paused and turned to Tommy, concerned since it wasn’t an emotion he had felt from him before. “You okay?”

Tommy blinked and faced him, the feeling darkened before it dissipated almost entirely. “Yeah. I’ve just seen a lot of injuries from accidents, it made me think how close of a call that was. It’s not often my work collides with my real life so... violently.”

“Oh,” Wilbur muttered, frowning at the reminder of how much horror Tommy had seen at such a young age.

But, Tommy didn’t let it stall him, and unbuckled his seatbelt, practically jumping out of the car. When he didn’t move, Tommy paused and leaned back into the car. “You coming?”

“Didn’t know if you wanted me to or not,” Wilbur said, getting out and rounding the car to get on the sidewalk with him.

They had to walk at least a block and a half to get to the bank and when they did Wilbur was a little surprised at just how nice it was on the inside. The ceilings were tall and the doorways were arched with windows above them, there were leather couches and a long hallway with offices. The counter went all the way across the room and was separated by cubicle-like walls for privacy.

There were quite a few tellers behind the counter, all of them with a line in front of them. Tommy walked over to the one with the fewest people and stood in line. “So, what did you need to do here anyway?”

“Cashing a check,” he said, taking his paycheck out of his pocket.

“Oh I see.”

They made idle conversation about nothing in particular until they moved to the front of the line. Wilbur hung back to keep a respectful distance as Tommy talked with the teller.

Wilbur shifted on his feet and looked around the room, noting a strange presence near the door. Eyes narrowing, he singled in on a man sitting on a bench by the door with a clipboard in his hands, staring at them.

The man just seemed out of place in the bank, tapping a pen on the clipboard. As soon as Wilbur made eye contact with the man he was able to catch a sense of determined anticipation. He smiled at Wilbur and looked back down at his clipboard, dimming the readability of his emotions.

Wilbur was about to push harder to figure out what was so off about him, but Tommy bumped his shoulder. He smacked his arm with a thick envelope, a grin on his face.

“You good?” He asked with a confused look, concern filtering in as he glanced around the room.

“Yeah, just spaced out,” Wilbur assured, guiding Tommy toward the door. “I thought you liked using a card.”

Tommy paused at the door and shrugged. “It’s for Tubbo,” he said, opening it with a flourish. “Ladies first.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes and ruffled his hair before he walked out. He would’ve made a joke, shoved him around a bit, but he just wanted to get out of there.

Tommy took notice, because he stopped once they were outside, a strange expression on his face. “Are you sure you’re okay? You’re acting weird.”

“Me? Weird?” Wilbur laughed, patting Tommy on the shoulder as he snuck another glance inside the bank before the door closed completely. The man was gone.

“Yes, you. You’re being weird.”

“I’m not. I’m being very normal.”

Tommy stared at him for a moment, then his face morphed into realization. “Is it withdrawals? Oh shit, we should go get some patches I didn’t think it would get-“

“Tommy I’m fine, it’s not withdrawals. I only had one, remember? This side of the city just makes me nervous,” he excused, waving a dismissive hand. Though the urge to have another cigarette was there, it wasn’t as strong as it used to be. It was mostly a mental issue and he had grown a tolerance to giving into things like that, since he had to resist the pull of his power to prevent him from losing his mind everyday.

“Oh,” Tommy said dumbly, starting to walk again. “Then let’s go.”

They both kept walking toward where the car was parked and Wilbur noted that the sun was setting.

The car was in sight, so Wilbur slowed down and dug around in his pockets for his keys while Tommy walked a few steps ahead. It was the worst possible moment of vulnerability, just distracted enough to where he didn’t see it coming.

He was grabbed from behind, the blade of a knife resting on his neck while another hand covered his mouth. The man dragged him backward a few steps, closer to the nearby alleyway and Wilbur huffed in annoyance, fingers digging into the man’s sleeves. He was wearing a leather jacket and gloves, smart.

Wilbur saw the moment Tommy noticed his absence by his side, whirling around to face them with a gasp. He almost wished Tommy hadn’t seen them, then he could’ve gotten out of

the man's grip much faster by using his powers. But it would be far too obvious.

"Wil!" Tommy shouted, rushing after them when the man dragged him further back into the alleyway to hide the crime better.

"The money," he demanded, nodding at Tommy as he emerged in the entrance of the alley. "Or I kill your friend here."

Wilbur almost felt bad for the guy, maybe he really needed the money. But, his sympathy dropped the second he noticed the unique build of the knife. He recognized it from one of his outings as Tragedy, it was the signature make of a drug-smuggling group that recently got busted. They probably were looking for other ways to make money, mugging people seemed to be one of them.

Tommy was still, then he blinked and reached into his pocket, taking out the envelope. "Okay. Okay, here. You can have it."

Wilbur felt terrible, he wanted to do more than just stand there, he knew Tubbo needed that money should Tommy ever get caught. But, a slit throat would knock him unconscious faster than anything else and kill him soon after. He also didn't want to traumatize Tommy, even though he knew he could probably save him in time.

The fear and anxiousness radiating off of Tommy said enough already, but his hands shook and his eyes were blown wide as he held the envelope out.

Wilbur watched and waited for an opportunity, things almost seemed like slow motion as he calculated what he could do. The man was pressed up against his back, and he extended the hand out that was covering his mouth, eyes on the envelope. His grip loosened around his neck ever-so-slightly.

Wilbur saw an out and he took it. He used all of his strength to shove them both backwards, slamming them into the alley wall behind them, knocking their heads together. The man had swung his arms out to regain his balance and the knife was knocked from his hand. It clattered to the ground and that was all the green light he needed.

Wilbur moved to push himself off the wall but the man recovered quickly, wrapping an arm all the way around his neck and squeezing. Wilbur elbowed him in the ribs but the man only grunted and tightened his grip.

He couldn't breathe. Wilbur cursed himself internally for not taking more time to train with Techno, he didn't think he would get into a situation like this.

The thought reminded him of his defensive training and gave him an idea, as his vision started to darken he bent his knees and threw him over his shoulder, his back hitting the ground with a thud.

Wilbur put his hands on his knees and took in gasps of air, almost impressed at the guy's ability to match his strength. The man groaned and pushed himself to his feet, clutching his

stomach. Then, he lunged forward and grabbed the collar of Wilbur's jacket, fist pulling back to punch him.

Tommy ran forward and pushed him off before he could get a hit in, which made the man angrier. He regained his balance and shoved Tommy in retaliation, causing him to trip and fall backward. Tommy gasped when the wind was knocked out of him.

A flare of anger rose and begged to take charge, fueling his movements. Wilbur kicked the back of the man's legs out from under him and he fell to the ground, managing to roll over onto his back.

Without further thought, Wilbur dropped all of his weight down on the man's chest and punched him in the face, then he hit him again. And again. And again.

It only clocked in his brain what was happening when he finally knocked the man unconscious. He stopped and moved off of him, eyebrows furrowed as he started to regulate his breathing.

He was so close to losing control. It was getting worse. He didn't even use his power that time.

"Holy shit," Tommy breathed, a slight laugh escaping him. "Where did you learn to do all that?"

Blinking, Wilbur was confused at the fogginess in his head, which was probably how he was able to stop himself from going overboard.

"Wilbur?" Tommy whispered worriedly, catching his attention. "Are you okay?"

Wilbur turned to face him, nodding. The action made his head spin and he didn't know why, but Tommy's jaw dropped when he saw him, inhaling sharply.

Tommy got up and hurried over to him, sitting down on the grimy ground to get a better look at him. "Oh fuck. He got you."

"Huh?"

"With the knife. He managed to cut you. But it doesn't look too deep," he clarified, already putting his hand over the wound to heal. A glowing light lit up his face and Wilbur just stared past him, trying to calm his emotions. "How do we get in these situations?" Tommy muttered rhetorically, just to fill the silence.

He started to feel a bit better as Tommy looked at his bloodied knuckles.

The man was unconscious, but the fact he was still breathing put a painful itch in the back of his head.

Wilbur stood up abruptly and Tommy was confused as he watched him walk over and pick up the knife. "Should we call the police?" Tommy asked, uneasiness and overall disturbance coming from him.

“No,” Wilbur responded shortly.

“Why not?”

“He has our faces and he’s with a dangerous group,” he explained, chucking the knife into the nearest dumpster. “If we got him sent to jail he’d send people after us.”

“Oh,” Tommy mumbled, glancing at the man’s body. After a moment, he leaned over and checked his pulse. “How do you know?”

Shrugging, Wilbur walked back over and held his hand out. “The knife, I read about it somewhere.”

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him for a second before he sighed and took his hand. Wilbur pulled him to his feet and looked him over. “Are *you* okay?”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “He just pushed me down, I’m fine. *You’re* the one who almost died.”

“I’m fine now.”

“You’re fine because I made you fine, you would’ve died if I wasn’t here, Wil.”

“Thank you,” he blinked, he didn’t know what point he was trying to make.

“No, that’s not what I’m getting at,” Tommy huffed, pausing to look at him. “You should’ve just let him take the money.”

Wilbur shrugged again, slapping a hand on his shoulder before he started walking toward the car again.

“I’m serious, Wilbur. That was a dumb move you pulled. I mean- have some self-preservation, man,” he chided, following after him. “Hell, you were *seconds* away from dying. If I didn’t see that shit in time, you would’ve bled out. Does that not- I don’t know? Does that not *scare* you?”

“It doesn’t matter now, Tommy,” Wilbur said dismissively, splitting off to go to the driver’s side of his car. He got in and shut the door and sat in the startling silence for a couple seconds before Tommy got in on the passenger side.

“It matters to me,” Tommy argued, still looking at him. “You know I have enough money, it’s not like I *needed* it. You risked your life for no good reason.”

Wilbur stayed there without moving for a moment, taking it all in. He didn’t know what to say.

Tommy exhaled deeply, realizing he wasn’t going to get an answer out of him. “Are you even okay to drive right now?”

“It’s not like I’m drunk,” Wilbur scoffed, putting the key into the ignition as the car rumbled to life.

“Look at me.”

Wilbur sighed and turned to face Tommy, only to get blinded with a light. He winced and held his hand up. “What the fuck, man!”

“Oh shut up,” he laughed, lowering what he could now see was his phone with the flashlight on. “I need to check your pupils for a concussion. *Then* you can drive.”

“A warning next time,” Wilbur complained, putting his hand down. “What if I do have a concussion?”

“If you have a concussion I’m getting us an Uber,” Tommy said, raising the light again and moving it side to side, eyebrows pinched together in concentration.

Wilbur let out a slight laugh. “How do you plan on explaining all the blood?”

“Oh, right...” Tommy checked his other eye and then finally put his phone down. “Looks like we won’t need to anyway, you’re fine.”

“No concussion?”

“No concussion,” Tommy confirmed, leaning back in his seat. “I need to shower.”

Wilbur laughed again, hooking up his phone to the car to turn on music like nothing had just happened. “Yeah, you stink.”

Tommy shook his head and rolled his eyes. “That’s because now I’m covered in sweat and *your* blood, sooo.”

“I’m covered in my blood and sweat too,” Wilbur grinned, putting the car in reverse to get out of where he parallel parked.

Tommy just smiled, still a mix of lingering fear behind his unbothered appearance. Wilbur hoped one day he would feel safe enough to let his walls down and show his real emotions on the outside.

For now, Wilbur just sang along to the music while Tommy hummed and slowly began to ease up on his own. He knew they both needed the distraction.

## Chapter End Notes

my music taste is all over the place so i like lots of diff stuff but tommy and wilbur in this is more dad rock, so thats what im sticking to in the story itself + learn to fly is my fav foo fighters song  
and if you have recommendations lmk ! bc i like a lot of 90s-2000s rock

andddd happy holidays !!





# when doves cry

## Chapter Summary

Without even knocking, he burst into the room to see a large man standing in front of a hospital bed, quickly noticing that he wasn't a patient. There was a young woman in the bed, a trembling hand held out toward the man to stop him, but he wasn't looking at her. He was looking at Niki, an accusatory finger in her face where she was backed up near the wall.

Tommy immediately intervened, putting a hand in front of Niki and one out to create distance from the man. "Hey! Take a step back," he said loudly, grateful for his height that kept him eye level with the man.

The man seemed to change his demeanor slightly, a subtle difference Tommy caught onto many times in not only his field, but many others as a bystander. A difference in respect. *Oh*, Tommy thought sourly, *he's one of those*.

## Chapter Notes

// blood, implied/referenced domestic abuse

HI GUYS IM BACK AGAIN!!! MISS ME?? 🐱

BTW THANK YOU GUYS FOR 110K HITS THATS INSANE TO ME !! THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR ALL THE SUPPORT!!!

also i do feel kinda bad because i post so infrequently but we are coming close to the climax of the plot so ill prob be motivated to post faster to get there!! hehe

chapter title is a lyric from the song [When Doves Cry by Prince](#) and the chapter title actually serves a deeper meaning which you guys will see later on :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

With a gasp, his eyes shot open, jerking him back into consciousness. His hands shot up to his neck, a phantom pain withering away. The nightmare slipped from him as every second ticked on, but the panic lingered.

His legs were out in front of him and he could see he was still covered in blood, wearing the outfit he had been wearing all day.

Three black walls surrounded him, covered in leather padding that was also on the floor and ceiling. He was facing a familiar door that had a panel of bulletproof glass in it, though bullets weren't exactly the thing it was intended to keep out.

Wilbur moved to stand up but was quickly yanked back down when his wrists stayed in place. He was restrained to the wall behind him.

Normally, this situation would be a cause for concern. But for Wilbur, it was a good thing. It meant his family caught him before he did any more damage than he had already done.

He felt as though someone had thrown ice water on him, his hair sticking to his forehead uncomfortably. His wrists burned with bruises and his body ached like he had ran a marathon. Most notably, his head *hurt*.

"Oh, you're awake."

Wilbur's head snapped up and he met the eyes of his brother. Techno was standing in his pajamas holding a cup of coffee which he took a long, almost condescending, sip of. "What happened?" he asked, wincing when he looked too far up and the light above him hurt his eyes.

"You don't remember?"

Wilbur huffed, annoyed. "If I did, I wouldn't be asking you. Would I?"

"I guess not," Techno sighed, taking a step closer to the glass door he was on the other side of. "What *do* you remember?"

"The last thing I remember was... driving Tommy home from the bank..." his eyes widened, searching his memory in hopes that Tommy got home safe. Safe being; before Wilbur lost control.

"Okay, that makes a lot more sense. Anything after that?"

He shook his head.

"Well, I don't have any answers for you," Techno shrugged, free hand in his pocket.

"What? Did Dad put me in here then?"

Techno shook his head. "It was your code that was used on the door. You put yourself in here last night, Wil."

Wilbur looked down at his hands and tried to remember, a headache coming on. "Fuck. I can't- I don't know what happened. Did I kill someone?"

Techno frowned and Wilbur's eyes widened, sitting up.

"Techno, did I?"

“I don’t know,” he answered honestly, gesturing to the blood on him. “Your vitals were mostly fine, but I came in here while you were asleep to check if that was yours.”

“And?”

“Yours is all over you, the only blood that doesn’t match is on your fists.”

Wilbur sighed, dragging his hands down his face. “I don’t think I killed him.”

“Who?”

“Some mugger,” he dismissed, waving it off.

Techno pursed his lips. “Is that who slit your throat?”

Wilbur froze, eyebrows raised.

“Didn’t think I’d notice? That was too much blood for it to be anything else.”

“I hoped you wouldn’t,” Wilbur muttered, scratching at his neck.

“Tommy healed it, didn’t he?”

“Yeah, he did.”

Techno stayed quiet for a moment. “I think you’re losin’ control. You need to anchor better.”

“I know.”

“Seriously, try meditatin’ or somethin’.”

“I do, Techno, but it doesn’t make it better. We’ve tried everything, I might even be slowly dying or some shit. I’m getting worse.”

“You aren’t gettin’ worse and you aren’t dyin’,” Techno drawled, shifting on his feet. “We’ve been over this, it gets harder with more stress. Meditate.”

“I do!”

“More.”

“Fuck off, man. Where’s Dad?”

“Am I annoyin’ you or somethin’?” Techno asked lightheartedly, taking another sip of his coffee.

“ *Yes* . Let me out, I need to shower.”

“Clearly.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes.

“Are you gonna attack me?”

“No, but I want to.”

Techno chuckled but didn't say anything, leaning forward to type his code into the keypad.

He pressed a few buttons more and the handcuffs unlocked with a click, a hiss as the door opened.

Wilbur stood up with a groan, stretching his limbs. Techno made a face of disgust. “You smell like death.”

“Don't say that,” Wilbur hissed, making a move to slap him only for Techno to back up. “I didn't kill anyone this time.”

“I know, I'm messin' with you. But seriously, you reek and you gotta go to work soon.”

“Oh shit, right.”

Without another word, Wilbur hurried past Techno toward his room. He had flaked on Puffy too much recently, he couldn't be late on top of it.

~ + ~

The door to Tubbo's room was closed by the time he got up. Tommy assumed he was busy with a project of some kind or maybe he was sleeping in for once. He had been busy a lot more recently.

Tommy had already gotten ready for the day and he took one last glance at himself in the mirror, wincing. He looked as tired as he felt, he had ruined his sleep schedule beyond repair years ago, it was impossible for him to sleep at night anyway. Even if he could, he had too many things keeping him awake. Worry and fear gripping him by the throat, eyes drifting to the SUV parked across the street through his window.

So when the morning came, the few hours of sleep he had managed to get showed on his face. Tommy just hoped no one would bring it up, but he knew that it was inevitable since he was going to go see Wilbur.

The walk was cold, as it usually was in the fall, but it was different this time.

Tommy's thoughts drifted to the night before, of Wilbur. He had never witnessed such ferocity in a person. Tommy had seen it in him before, that night in the hospital parking lot. As blurry as that night was, he doesn't think he'll ever forget the sounds of pain from his potential kidnapper. The thudding of a boot connecting with his body.

Tommy's entire life is based around healing people, *helping* them. When he was given his doctorate, he pledged an oath. The Hippocratic Oath.

He didn't know how to feel, he didn't like senseless violence. It surrounded him every night at work and every day on the news. Except, Wilbur had only engaged in a fight to protect him. Twice. So, he guessed that made an exception to his moral code.

He arrived at the bakery with his fingers numb and his hair a mess again, thanks to the wind.

A wave of warmth hit him as he entered, taking in the sweet smell. His legs carried him to his usual booth and he sat down, seeing the fairly long line at the counter.

This time, he saw Wilbur behind the counter. Unlike before where he had to ask Techno and found him behind the bakery smoking. He had his customer service smile on his face, trading bills for pastries and coffee.

Tommy patiently laid his head down on his hands, facing the window. He watched people pass by and created stories for them, working with people so much and so closely gave him the ability to quickly read people. He made assumptions based on what he saw, how they walked and communicated with one another, through verbal and body language. He imagined what they could be talking about, intrigued by the way some people moved their hands while they talked, and others walked backwards to face a bigger group.

Observing people was a quiet pastime, how he understood people as human beings rather than viewing them in the clinical sense he lost himself in sometimes.

That too, served against the oath he pledged. To remember that his patients were more than that, human beings. He'd seen coworkers without empathy, it was scarily common in his field. Mostly because the majority of them didn't want to be there and because having your heart unprotected meant it could be broken easily.

Tommy nearly jolted when he felt something being placed on the table. His head swiveled up and he saw Wilbur giving him a tired, yet relieved smile.

"I didn't see you come in," he commented, pushing a plate with a muffin on it over to him. Chocolate chip.

"I'm sneaky like that, I'm like a mouse."

Wilbur laughed. "A mouse, huh?"

He nodded, pushing the plate back toward him. "Yep, a mouse who didn't pay for that."

Wilbur scoffed lightheartedly, pushing it back. "It's on the house, you need to eat something."

"What if I've already eaten?"

Wilbur leveled him a look, raising an eyebrow at him.

"Fine," he huffed, relenting and taking the muffin.

“You really should take better care of yourself, Tommy. You look like shit.”

Tommy went to take a bite but paused, examining Wilbur better now that he was closer.

He was sitting across from him, one leg out of the booth in case he had to get up again. There was a certain tenseness to his shoulders, like he was struggling to carry a heavy weight. His hair was almost as messy as Tommy’s, curls falling over his forehead in a way that deepened the shadows under his eyes.

“What?” Wilbur asked, sitting up straighter, as if he suddenly realized Tommy was analyzing him.

“Hypocrite,” he muttered, taking a bite. His eyebrows raised at how good it was and took another bite. “How much sleep did you get last night?”

“You shouldn’t talk with food in your mouth, it’s gross.”

Tommy gave him an unimpressed stare. “*You* look like shit, quite frankly.”

Wilbur looked over at the counter. “I think they need my help-“

“There’s no one in line, Wil.”

Sighing, Wilbur shrugged. “Enough, how about you?”

Tommy scoffed out a laugh. “Nice one. I got enough too.”

“You can’t take my answer,” Wilbur huffed, crossing his arms. “Seriously, you look like you got into a fight with yourself in the middle of the night or something. You gotta get more sleep.”

Rolling his eyes, he retorted back without thinking. “Maybe it’s hard to sleep when I can’t get the image of my friend with his throat slit out of my head.”

There was a long moment of silence and Tommy looked up from his muffin, seeing that Wilbur had a guilty look on his face. “Sorry,” he said quietly, switching between making eye contact and staring at the table.

Tommy frowned. “Sorry? Don’t apologize for that I don’t- Wilbur, you scared the shit out of me last night. I mean, you should’ve seen what I was seein’, it was like you were possessed! And that’s the second time you’ve done something like that!” he stressed, lowering his voice when he saw someone glance over at him. “You’re gonna turn me into another fuckin’ Tubbo, man!”

“Okay, you can’t be mad about the first one- your life was in imminent danger,” Wilbur argued weakly, wincing when Tommy narrowed his eyes at him.

“You know what I mean. I see people come into the hospital all the time, good people who were just trying to help, most don’t come out. Hero types always get a tragic end, Wil. I see that complex in you and I just...” he trailed off, he didn’t know how to phrase it, because it

sounded ridiculous now. He just didn't want Wilbur to end up in a body bag because of his lack of self-preservation.

Wilbur gave him a soft smile, tilting his head. "Don't worry, Tommy. I'm definitely no hero."

Tommy nodded absentmindedly, fidgeting with his hands.

"Hey, you're one to talk, though," he said, raising an eyebrow at him. "You stayed behind in the hospital when bombs were going off."

"To save Techno," Tommy excused, though it fell short when he realized that still counted.

"How about no 'hero'-ing for both of us?" Wilbur proposed, holding out his hand to shake.

Tommy rolled his eyes again at his antics but took his hand anyway, huffing when Wilbur chuckled and got up. "Okay, gotta go help now. For real this time."

He watched Wilbur get up and take over for Techno at the counter, pointing at the pastries in the glass case and explaining them to the customers ordering.

As he watched him, Tommy picked up on an uneasiness in his posture, exhaustion in his limbs. He wouldn't have thought much of it since they did have a near-death experience just the night before. But, something was different. Something was weighing down on him, it had been for a while. Tommy wondered if he would ever find out what it was.

~ + ~

As much as he didn't want to sound cliché, Mondays were truly the worst. Especially since the week had barely begun and he was already tired.

By the time he woke up and got ready, Wilbur was already knocking at his front door. When he opened it, Wilbur grinned and gave him a big hug, like he always did.

Tommy had been too tired to go to the music store before his shift and he didn't think Wilbur would drive all the way from his work downtown. But, he found himself not that surprised at Wilbur's persistence to drive him, he seemed happy just being able to do things for him. It warmed something in Tommy's chest he didn't know was there.

It did make Tommy feel a lot safer, too. He got in Wilbur's car and already felt much better behind the safety of the steel doors, off of the sketchy sidewalks he normally took to work. He was thankful Wilbur insisted on taking him because he wasn't sure he would be able to walk by himself in the dark again.

Wilbur seemed to be just as affected by the night before, locking the doors before he even buckled his seatbelt. His knuckles were white on the steering wheel, this time, clean of blood.

Tommy barely remembered healing them for him, too busy trying to subdue the absolute terror that had overwhelmed him at the sight of Wilbur's neck sliced open.

"You didn't have to come all the way over here again, I don't want to be a bother," Tommy started, breaking the silence they had fallen into. "I doubt I would get mugged twice in one week."

Wilbur huffed something akin to a laugh, connecting his phone to the car. "You're never a bother, Tommy. I wanted to drive you, I already didn't like that you were walking to and from work alone. The other night just sealed that for me."

Tommy said nothing, because he wasn't going to argue. As much as he felt bad about taking up Wilbur's time, he liked these drives with him. They were calming, in a way. He was able to get lost in his thoughts and the music while in the comforting presence of another person.

"Plus, this way our schedules kind of line up! We get to hang out more like this," he added, much more upbeat as he started playing another song Tommy hadn't heard before.

Tommy smiled. "That's true."

He pulled out of Tommy's driveway and headed out on the road, tapping his hands on the wheel to the beat of the song.

"Oh! That reminds me," Tommy said, sitting up straighter as he turned toward him. "You never sent me your playlist."

Wilbur's eyebrows scrunched together. "I didn't?"

"No, well. I mean, you did say that *before* we got mugged so you probably forgot."

"I see," Wilbur muttered, thoughtful as he stared at the road ahead. "I have a weird question."

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, brow raised. "What is it?"

"Did I say I was going anywhere after I dropped you off that night?"

Racking his brain, Tommy tried to sift through the fuzzy memories of that night, mostly lost to his lingering fear and horror. "I don't think so."

Wilbur seemed satisfied with that answer, turning up the music. The rest of the trip was mostly spent listening to the songs without much conversation.

~ + ~

When he got out of the car, waving goodbye to Wilbur. Tommy noticed that Wilbur didn't drive away until he was inside the hospital.



When he got in, he went through the motions of clocking in per usual.

It was only when he heard his name being called that he focused in on his surroundings again, blinking like he had just woken up. Niki's hands were on his shoulders and she gave him a nervous smile when he met her eyes. "Are you feeling better?"

Tommy nodded, glancing around nervously. "Is everything alright?" he asked, hoping he didn't miss anything too important.

She patted his shoulders and her hands dropped to her sides, seeming more anxious than usual. "Yeah, I was just making sure you're okay."

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed as he tried to read between the lines, because if she was trying to send him a coded message, he was not picking up on it. Niki seemed to realize this and sighed, shoulders slumping.

"Sorry, I don't know. I'm just stressed out, you know? It's good to know that you're okay. All of this stuff going on..." she trailed off, exhaling shakily.

Tommy frowned, getting the feeling that he just wanted to hug her. A terrible guilt was festering in his gut, he knew that she was feeling this way because she knew about what he did. She was an accomplice, she helped him cover it up. And now she was getting more scared everyday. "Don't be sorry, Niki. If anything happens, I'll make sure they know you are innocent. It's my fault we're in this mess anyway," he said earnestly, keeping his voice down.

Niki just shook her head. "No, Tommy I don't- I'm not worried about that. I'm worried for *you*. I can't help but feel like you're already gone and..." she paused and bit her lip, throwing a look over her shoulder while avoiding eye contact with him. "I'm sorry, I don't know."

"It'll be okay," he lied, trying to give her a reassuring smile. "Don't worry about me, Niki. I'll figure something out, okay? I promise."

The promise felt like acid on his tongue, but he didn't want to worry her more. Niki nodded and sniffled, holding her eyes open and dabbing at the corners of them. "Just be careful," she whispered, trying to hide the quiver in her voice.

"I will."

She nodded again and managed to plaster a composed look on her face. "I'll see you at lunch break."

Although he hardly ever actually ate lunch on time, he agreed wordlessly anyway, which seemed to make her feel better. After looking at him for another moment, she walked away and Tommy decided he should get to work.

Shouting came from a room nearby and he knew exactly who was tending to that section. Tommy looked at the woman and her son who was sitting in front of him and held up a finger. "One moment," he muttered apologetically, though they seemed just as afraid of the commotion as he felt, hidden under a professional front.

Tommy left the room in a half-sprint as nurses started rushing toward the noise from behind him. When he got closer he heard the shouting coming from a room with a closed door, one of the rooms that was used for someone who was being prepped for surgery.

Without even knocking, he burst into the room to see a large man standing in front of a hospital bed, quickly noticing that he wasn't a patient. There was a young woman in the bed, a trembling hand held out toward the man to stop him, but he wasn't looking at her. He was looking at Niki, an accusatory finger in her face where she was backed up near the wall.

Tommy immediately intervened, putting a hand in front of Niki and one out to create distance from the man. "Hey! Take a step back," he said loudly, grateful for his height that kept him eye level with the man.

The man seemed to change his demeanor slightly, a subtle difference Tommy caught onto many times in not only his field, but many others as a bystander. A difference in respect. *Oh* , Tommy thought sourly, *he's one of those* .

"What is going on?" Tommy asked, still looking at the man with Niki right behind him, he still hadn't gotten a chance to check on her, but he could do that once the situation had deescalated.

"I want a different fuckin' doctor," he spat, shifting on his feet with his hands balled into fists. "This *bitch* is fuckin' accusing me!"

Tommy steeled his expression, jaw clenched. "How about you tell me what happened and I'll switch your doctor, okay?"

It was a compromise to calm the guy down, but he was mostly concerned with leaving Niki alone with him again. The man huffed, crossing his arms. "Fine. I brought my fiancée in because she had glass in her eye and she gets a fuckin' female for a doctor! An' she asks me all these questions- accusing me of hurting my wife-to-be!"

Tommy glanced behind the man at the young woman in the bed, lo and behold, her face was scratched up, likely from shards of glass. Her left eye was closed and there was a bruise and gash on her forehead. It looked like she was hit with glass of some kind, shattering on her head and embedding itself in the skin. Tommy's heart squeezed in his chest, connecting the dots as his gaze slid back onto the man in front of him. "She has to ask those questions," he placated, though he was close to hitting the man himself. He had to stay composed, he couldn't lose his temper, he needed to stay rational. "How about you go sit down, yeah? I will arrange you with a different doctor."

The man didn't reply, but he did walk to the other side of the room where a lone chair was, face pinched up.

Tommy turned to meet Niki's furious gaze, eyes on the man's back the entire time. He quickly took her by the arm and led her out of the room, shutting the door carefully.

"Are you alright?" he asked her, hands on her forearms where she just stared at the door, jaw tight. "Niki?"

She shook her head and pursed her lips together to keep from crying, Tommy's face fell.

Sally broke off from the group of nurses that had gathered nearby, waiting to make sure everyone was okay. She looked at Niki, then up at Tommy, and frowned. "Can you tell Dr. Reeves to check in on this room? I'll give him the rundown in a minute," he asked Sally over Niki's shoulder, who nodded and speed-walked away.

Tommy guided Niki to a break room that was thankfully empty and sat her down. Now that they were out of sight, tears were filling Niki's eyes and she shook her hands out in frustration. Tommy had known her for at least a couple years, maybe more, in all that time she had never looked so stressed. Broken down. Niki was like the big sister he never had, and seeing her so distraught hurt his heart.

"Did he hurt you?" Tommy asked worriedly, it was one of his biggest concerns. He knew that Niki had several bad experiences with violent patients in the past, but there hadn't been a recent one that he knew of.

She shook her head again, tilting her head up and dabbing at the corners of her eyes with her fingers, for a reason Tommy didn't quite understand. "No, he didn't," she said quietly, sniffing. "But, he hurt that girl, often. I could see it, her medical record goes on for years. Years, Tommy."

Tommy frowned, a terrible pit formed in his gut as he thought about it.

"How could that have gone unnoticed for that long?" she asked, though it wasn't really directed at him. "That's not even the worst part. She's pregnant."

Tommy's jaw dropped, recalling how gaunt and pale the woman had looked; she couldn't be healthy. The silence in the room was painful as Tommy processed it all and Niki fended off her tears. "It's gonna be okay, you noticed and now we will do everything we can to help her."

Niki nodded, fanning her eyes to dry them faster. "I'm sorry, I- I deal with this stuff all the time I should be fine," she stuttered, taking a shaky breath.

"It's okay, Niki. No need to be sorry, you're under a lot of stress. But, it's going to be okay. I will make sure that she gets the help she needs, I promise," he said, this time it was something he knew he could do, a hand over his heart like he had done when he pledged his oath.

Nodding again, Niki huffed out something like a laugh. “You’re making a lot of promises today,” she pointed out softly, sniffing.

Tommy didn’t say anything, he just stood there like an idiot, which made her actually laugh, something sad in it. Without a word he put his arms out and she took the opportunity, springing forward to envelop him in a tight hug.

“Why did you do it?” she asked into his shoulder, so quiet he almost didn’t hear it. He didn’t need clarification to know what she was talking about.

“I’m not all that sure,” he answered honestly, it was the question he had been asking himself ever since that night. Why he didn’t just take the easy way out, why he didn’t just mind his own business. “When I found him, I saw some kind of humanity I didn’t expect.”

Niki pulled back, hands falling to her sides as she gave him a curious look that encouraged him to continue.

“It reminded me of why I still did any of this, why I didn’t fight it all those years ago. I wanted to help people,” he paused, shifting on his feet. “No matter who it was, I always helped who I could, because I knew what it was like to be helpless.”

Niki frowned but her eyes held a proud sheen to them, it was bittersweet. “Never change, Tommy,” she said with a soft chuckle, wiping at the corners of her eyes again.

“I won’t,” and it was like another promise, one that was somewhere in between the other two. He truly didn’t know if he could keep it. “Now you make me a promise and take a break, stay in here for a while. I’ll take care of your patients.”

Hesitating, Niki opened her mouth to object, then sighed. “You know what? Okay, I’ll stay in here a bit longer.”

A grin broke out on Tommy’s face as he moved toward the door. “Good! I’ll be back to update you!”

Niki sat down at one of the tables, waving a little and returning his smile, although it wasn’t as bright. With that, Tommy exited the room more focused than normal.

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He couldn’t sleep. He had been in and out of consciousness the entire day, the sun seeping further into his room through the blinds. Tommy had spent almost the entire night playing the strings of that delicate situation. Eventually, they were able to get the woman alone and admit what her fiancé had been doing all those years. Police were contacted and Tommy got Niki out just in time to see the man get handcuffed and dragged off, bumping his head on the police car door before he was taken away.

He still couldn't get over what happened with Niki, though. It was keeping him up, but his body was still tired, dragging him in and out of sleep.

So when he couldn't take it any longer, he got out of bed and opened his bedroom door, taking the basket of his clean blue scrubs and pulling it into his room.

It was late and there was a few hours until he had to be at work, but that's not where he was planning on going yet. Tommy got dressed in his work clothes, shouldering on his lab coat and an actual coat over it. The one Niki had got him after he healed Tragedy.

He was out the door soon after getting ready, feet carrying him in a familiar direction. Tommy made it to the train station in record time, probably because all of the other times were spent stalling.

His head was spinning by the time he stood and waited for a train, pointedly looking away from the tracks as the minutes ticked on. Tommy kept his mind active, focusing on things that would keep his thoughts from drifting.

The train pulled up and Tommy was grateful, finding a spot and sitting down. The sound of the train thrumming and squealing against the tracks was louder than usual, the chiming of the doors occasionally going off.

After a while, he finally got to his stop and hurried to exit, not looking back. His legs carried him in a familiar direction, like he was on autopilot. Tommy had to put in a lot of effort to keep his mind on something other than the guilt and dread creating knots in his gut.

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When he finally arrived at the music store, Tommy fidgeted with his hands, peeking in through the big windows before he made it to the door. He spotted a familiar lump on the couch, seemingly asleep.

Tommy's eyebrows furrowed and he opened the door, announcing his entry with a ding. Wilbur shot up from the couch, an apology that died on his tongue when he saw who it was. "Tommy!" he grinned, stumbling off of the couch toward him, clothes wrinkled in a way that told Tommy he was probably asleep for a while. He wondered how 2 Melodies was still in business if they hardly got any customers.

"Hey, Wil," Tommy smiled, throwing his arms out in time before Wilbur wrapped him up in a hug like he always did. "You act like you didn't see me this morning."

Wilbur let go of him and shrugged, still beaming with a tiredness to his eyes.

"When was the last time you slept, man? Like- slept in your bed?" Tommy asked, trying to keep his tone playful.

Sighing, Wilbur sat back down on the couch. “Last night,” he said, kicking his feet up onto the coffee table with his hands behind his head. Tommy couldn’t tell if it was a lie or not, so he opted to believe him. “I’m just extra tired, I dunno why.”

Tommy raised a suspicious eyebrow at him, flopping down onto the couch next to him. “Well, I’m not your boss or anything- but I don’t think you should be sleepin’ on the job.”

Wilbur laughed, a huff through his nose as he blinked and looked around. “I was awake enough to hear you come in,” he pointed out weakly, standing after a moment. Tommy watched him walk around the small store, checking that nothing was stolen.

In the meantime, Tommy’s thoughts drifted back to Niki, how anxious she had been. This whole thing was stressing her out more and more, Tommy didn’t know what to do. He wanted to help her, but the only way he could think of was magically stopping the investigation, which he had no clue how to do.

As Wilbur shuffled around somewhere behind him, moving boxes and other items, Tommy delved into his current conundrum. It was consuming him, every time his thoughts strayed from what he was focused on, it went back to his looming fate.

It was soon interrupted with Wilbur dropping back down on the couch by his side, staring at him. “What?” Tommy asked, nose scrunching up as he tried to shove everything away. For some reason, it was like his walls fell down around Wilbur and his heart was trying to force himself to open up. Trying to get him to take a risk, to use that opportunity to just get it off his chest already.

Wilbur tilted his head, raising an eyebrow at him. “You’re here early.”

Tommy nodded slowly, managing a slight laugh. “I woke up early and got bored.”

Crossing his arms, Wilbur leaned back into the couch. A long silence stretched through the room, really letting Tommy soak in the weight of his lie. “I told you that you can talk to me, remember?”

“Yeah,” Tommy shrugged, feigning confusion. “Nothing’s- I’m all good.”

Wilbur sat up straight once more and clasped his hands together, a knowing look on his face. “You don’t have to tell me anything if you don’t want to, I just want you to know that you can.”

He opened his mouth to reassure him, tell him that he was fine. But, something stopped him. Tommy thought back on what that gas station cashier said, that he at least needed to tell *someone*. Someone he trusted.

It made him hesitate and that was a response enough, causing Wilbur to incline his head to show he was ready to listen.

The weight of it all was killing him, so he decided he would go with half-truths. Similar to what he told the cashier. “Okay, well. It’s a long story. But, I kinda... um,” he tried to get the

words out but his throat felt like it was closing up. He couldn't back out now. "I- so... there are a lot of rules that come with my job. I broke a pretty big one and I'm-" Tommy swallowed down his nerves, staring at the coffee table.

For some reason, opening up and asking for help was the most agonizing part of the whole thing. It was like there was something physically stopping him from just getting the words out, practically screaming it in his own head. A mantra. *I need help. Help me. Help me. Help me.*

Wilbur didn't seem bothered by his struggle to speak, patient and calm. It made it a little easier, there wasn't that pressure like when he would talk to Tubbo. Tubbo who probably didn't know what patience or serenity even were, opting to shake the answers out of him like loose change. Tommy understood, though, he was too anxious to slow down, too high-strung for patience.

There were a million thoughts racing in his head, split into two sides. One was yelling at him to just say it. Just get it off of his chest. Send out that cry for help. The other was telling him it was too big of a burden. To keep his mouth shut. That there would be no point in telling anyone.

He came to a compromise. "It's not that big of a deal, but it's worrying my friend Niki a lot," he shrugged, trying to act as nonchalant as possible. "She's been having a lot of stressful shit going on and I wanna help. But, I don't know what to do since it's all work related and I can't change that."

A moment passed and Tommy finally looked up at Wilbur who was giving him a considerate look, thinking. "Well, if you can't change the situation, you can try to help take her mind off it. Have her take a break."

Tommy frowned, crossing his arms. "She can't take off from work unless she proves she's sick, and there's strict rules around it. The only reason I can is because I'm a minor."

He doesn't say that there's rumors of those laws being challenged, the ones that keep him protected from being forced to work more than he can. Exceptions that the President's cabinet are trying to make, saying that people with powers like Tommy's are too valuable to not be taken advantage of as much as possible.

"She works every night except Sundays, and that will be the same for me once I turn eighteen."

Wilbur's expression fell and he looked down at his hands, a dreadful emptiness in the air that Tommy was hoping to avoid.

Tommy opened his mouth to change the subject, to shift it to something that wouldn't be sad to talk about. But, Wilbur spoke first.

"Have you ever gone roller-skating before?"

"What?"

“Roller-skating,” he repeated, making eye contact again. “My dad’s friend owns a rink and he lets me and Techno in after close sometimes. It’s pretty fun once you get the hang of it.”

Tommy blinked, wondering where that came from, Wilbur took notice and laughed a little.

“I asked because I got an idea. Maybe you can’t do anything about your work situation, but it helps to have some fun,” he started. “You could get Niki and even Tubbo and Ranboo to go with us Sunday night. I could get us all into the rink for free.”

Smiling, Tommy considered it. He had never roller-skated, or done any kind of cool thing like that before, but it sounded fun. It definitely looked cool too. He would definitely be able to get Niki to come, especially since neither of them got opportunities for fun activities like that before. There was only one thing. “I don’t know how to skate,” Tommy admitted dumbly. “I don’t think Niki, Ranboo, or Tubbo know how either.”

Wilbur chuckled, waving a hand. “Techno and I do, we can teach you guys.”

“Really? You’d do that?”

Nodding, Wilbur hummed. “Yeah, of course.”

“That’d be fuckin’ sick!” Tommy exclaimed, sitting up straighter with his growing excitement. “I’ll ask Niki tonight and Tubbo when I get back home.”

“Great! I’ll make sure to drag Techno along.”

Tommy looked around and noticed the lack of a head of pink hair behind the counter. “Where is he anyway?”

Wilbur waved a dismissive hand lazily. “He’s off with our dad right now, he’s still under supervision.”

“Have the police found out who was after him?”

Pausing, Wilbur glanced at him for a second before he stood up and surveyed the room for something to do. “Not yet,” he answered vaguely, walking behind the counter to sort something Tommy couldn’t see.

Tommy twisted in his seat to face him again, brows furrowed. He almost wanted to pry, to prod more about why he was suddenly trying to find something to occupy himself with to avoid that conversation. But, he decided against it.

Wilbur seemed to be just as stressed as him and Niki, though he pretended not to be.

“By the way, how’d you know?” he asked instead, catching Wilbur’s attention again.

“What do you mean?” Wilbur questioned slowly, hands flattening on the counter.

“How’d you know I was upset?”



Wilbur almost appeared to freeze, but then shifted on his feet. “I could just tell.”

Thinking on it for a second, Tommy nodded and accepted the answer. He supposed he was probably doing a poor job of hiding it, especially since it had just been so overwhelming. Plus, Wilbur was better at reading him than anyone else he knew, it made sense he could tell right away.

With that, Wilbur sighed tiredly and went back to whatever he was doing before, a tense line between his eyebrows the whole time.

Tommy decided Wilbur needed to go have fun roller-skating as much as the rest of them did.

## Chapter End Notes

its funny because i reread this recently to go over some smaller details and i realized i accidentally projected a bit too much and gave tommy a personality disorder !! but, i think it fits really well anyway so im gonna roll with it so if you want to, take a guess in the comments on what it is! LMAO itll be added to the tags soon but i wanna see if anyone can guess it

i know lots of people like writing ice skating in fics and stuff because its rlly cool but ive never ice skated before so i wouldnt know how to write that very well. plus i personally love roller skating and have lots of fond memories of it so i wanted to implement that in

also!! in celebration of hitting over 100k hits, i finally caved and made an [oath playlist](#) !! lmk if there's any more songs i should add that would fit

and btw... if you saw me accidentally post the notes for this chapter too early.. no you didnt. i meant to get it out wayyy earlier but i kept getting busy and urggggggg

## End Notes

go follow [my twitter](#) for updates when i post and stuff! <3 ( this is also where i am active the most if you wanna say hi)  
and [my insta](#) if u wanna send me stuff or msg me and dont have twitter! :)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!